

**Building Solidarity and Social Cohesion through Participatory Communication in  
Afghanistan: A Case Study of the National Solidarity Program**

Hosai Qasmi

Supervisor: Dr. Rukhsana Ahmed

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Department of Communication  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Ottawa

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### Abstract

Although different studies have been conducted on various aspects of the National Solidarity Program (NSP) in Afghanistan, research on strengthening solidarity and social cohesion through its participatory approach has received little attention. This research used development communication as a theoretical framework to understand the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan. The study employed a qualitative case study. To this end, the study used semi-structured interviews via email and telephone with 10 participants. Thematic analysis was used to code and categorize the data. The study findings show that the NSP appears to promote participation and increase collectiveness among the Afghan people, which, in turn, seem to strengthen solidarity and social cohesion. Finally, future research areas are discussed in the light of these findings.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Najiullah Qasmi and Parwin Qasmi, and my two elder sisters, Semin Qasmi and Onay Qasmi, who have supported and loved me unconditionally.

Thank you mom and dada for believing in me. Thank you Semin and Onay for being my role models and power. And thank you to my nephew Ershad and niece Yasmine for making my life beautiful.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Statement of the Problem**

The unpleasant memories left by a past conflict in the minds of the people can transfer to their coming generations (Stiefel, 1999). Stiefel (1999) further argues that rebuilding a war-torn society is more difficult than ending a fight. Societies evolving from war and conflict face problems on all fronts (Stiefel, 1999). All of these problems are important, urgent, and in need of resolution, but the destruction of relationships between people and between people and state overshadows all other problems (Stiefel, 1999).

The case of Afghanistan is not an exception. Afghanistan has been in conflict and civil war for decades. This conflict has not only destroyed the physical structure but also affected the social structures, i.e. solidarity, trust, and collectiveness among people in the country (Boesen, 2004).

In 2001, with the fall of the Taliban, the newly formed Afghan government and its international partners started the development and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan. In 2001, after the formation of the new government in Afghanistan, Mr. Ashraf Ghani, the finance minister of that time, intended to establish several national development programs to gain people's trust in the government (Merchant, 2010). These programs included the National Emergency Employment Program (NEEP), National Health and Education Program (NHEP), National Transportation Program (NTP), National Telecommunication Program (NTP), and National Accountability Program (NAP) (Ghani & Lockart, 2008). And in 2003, the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) initiated the National Solidarity Program (NSP) to develop the abilities of the Afghan communities to plan, implement, and monitor their own development programs. The international donors through the funding pool of

Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), where the World Bank was in charge of funding cooperation (Torabi, 2007), financially support the program.

The NSP is one of the National Priority Programs (NPPs) of the government of Afghanistan (Kakar, 2005) and the largest development program in Afghanistan (Andrew et al., 2011). According to the National Solidarity Program website (2012), “the key objective of the NSP is to strengthen community-level governance in order to address the lack of social cohesion brought about by almost three decades of conflict and to re-build trust and confidence of the people of Afghanistan towards the government” (Para. 7). The National Solidarity Program (NSP) is designed in a participatory manner that allows people to participate in all steps of their own community’s development and be part of it (Torabi, 2007).

Against this backdrop, this thesis seeks to understand whether the NSP has been successful in bringing social cohesion<sup>1</sup> and solidarity<sup>2</sup> among people in Afghanistan. According to Boesen (2004), the NSP has taken participatory approach— collaboration between and among all stakeholders in all levels of decision-making from beginning to end (Dinbabo, 2003) – to the local-level development and promotes democracy at the grassroots level. The NSP establishes Community Development Councils (CDCs) through democratic elections held among community members in different districts. The election is based on the principle of one adult one vote, and avoids any kind of gender and class discriminations (Boesen, 2004). The goal of the

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as, “the degree to which members of a team like each other and enjoy each other’s company” (Kent, 2012, para. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Göbel and Pankoke (1999) define solidarity as, “the program of a universal identification, integration, and inclusion of all people as citizens and of all citizens as human beings having their own inalienable common properties and rights” (p.175).

NSP, according to Boeson (2004), is to encourage participation in a democratic process at local levels in Afghanistan.

Therefore, this study examines the role of the participatory approach by the NSP in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion with a particular focus on the participatory communication model of the program. To this end, the study applies development communication theory. To establish the theoretical framework for solidarity and social cohesion, the study identifies the elements of solidarity and social cohesion. These elements describe the concepts and allow the study to develop indicators to measure solidarity and social cohesion in a qualitative manner.

To establish the theoretical framework for social cohesion the study focuses on the elements of social cohesion described by Kearns and Forrest (2002). To form a theoretical framework for solidarity the study discusses the terms collective action and cooperation retrieved from different definitions of solidarity. Each element of social cohesion and solidarity are defined and discussed in detail in chapter two.

This study is a qualitative case study in nature, allowing interactions with participants in their natural settings. For example, the study includes the opinions of the community members and Community Development Council (CDC) members in the Khost province; and a Facilitating Partners (implementing partners) of the NSP that are CARE international in regards to the role of the NSP in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in the communities through the participatory communication approach, and nurturing community contribution and collective decision making among the people. More specifically, the study employed in-depth interviews, allowing the researcher to collect data from diverse parties involved with the NSP.

## Purpose of the Study

Afghanistan started its modernization process in the 1870s with establishing industries and introducing administrative, political, and social structures (Noorzai, 2006). Since then, the country witnessed the implementation of a number of reforms that occasionally faced public opposition (Noorzai, 2006). According to Noorzai (2006), in the past, one of the factors of failure of the modernization process in Afghanistan was the lack of public participation in the development processes.

However, Afghanistan is a traditional country and community is the central element of the Afghan society (Noorzai, 2006). In the history of Afghanistan, there has been little or no community participation in political decision-making and development planning (Boesen, 2004). On the local levels, a customary system of self-governance exists, especially among Pashtun tribes, which is known as *Jirga* (Wardak, 2004). Jirga is a local council, which consists of male representatives, who are mostly elders of a community, also called *white beards* of the community (Wardak, 2004). Basically, Jirga is a local institution, which in certain situations deals with conflicts within a community (Boesen, 2004; Wardak, 2004).

Noorzai (2006) states that until the fall of the Taliban, reforms were mostly centralized, non-participatory, and non-need based. He further argues that most of the time the development plans were against the social system and traditional values of the local people (Noorzai, 2006). Therefore, they faced people's opposition. But in 2003, with the establishment of the National Solidarity Program, the development process took a new turn from a non-participatory to a participatory process (Noorzai, 2006).

Scholars such as Kakar (2005) and Noorzai (2006) consider the National Solidarity Program (NSP) as one of the most successful development programs in the country to date. The

Afghan government started this initiative to empower communities through participation (Noorzai, 2006). The NSP advocates locally designed and implemented programs for more positive results (Noorzai, 2006). As stated by Melkote and Steeves (2001), in order to have positive results, it is important for development projects to have cultural and traditional support. According to Noorzai (2006), the NSP program has given the community members the authority and responsibility to design and implement their development projects, which decreases the risk of ignoring the culture and traditions in communities.

The National Solidarity Program (2012) claims that the NSP practices the Islamic values of unity, equality, and justice. It further claims that the NSP, since its start, has improved social cohesion and collective action among people in the country. The program was established in 2003 for the purpose of laying the foundation for subnational governance in the country in order to address the lack of social cohesion brought about by almost three decades of conflict, and to re-build the trust and confidence of the people of Afghanistan in the government (National Solidarity Program, 2012; Torabi, 2007). Using the case of the National Solidarity Program, this thesis examines the role of the participatory communication in building solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan. The thesis will address some of the arguments about significances of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion.

The main objectives of the study are:

- To present an over view of the National Solidarity Program and its activities;
- To explore the achievements and failures of the program; and
- To critically examine the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion.

## **Rationale for the Study**

Murtazashvili (2009) claims that Afghanistan has never had a central government that reached to the countryside. According to him, governments in Afghanistan have always stopped at the district or country level (2009). Murtazashvili (2009) further posits that “villages are well governed through informal rules and norms based on social norms that mediate daily life and constrain the action of villagers through customary forms of rewards and sanction” (p. 3).

Barfield (2003) believes that people often opposed the efforts by different governments and regimes in Afghanistan because the governments imposed the reforms on local population rather than allowing them to be part of designing these reforms.

With the fall of the Taliban and establishment of the new government in 2001, in Afghanistan, a number of development programs were designed and implemented with the financial support of the international community. Among the implemented projects, Boesen (2004), Kakar (2005), and Torabi (2007) consider the NSP as one of the most successful programs in the recent history of Afghanistan. Nixon (2008) also claims that the NSP is one of the most widespread development programs in Afghanistan.

There have been many studies conducted on the NSP with different focuses such as women’s participation in the Community Development Councils (CDCs) (Kakar, 2005), election process of the CDCs (Boesen, 2004), accountability of the NSP in the reconstruction process (Torabi, 2007), role of the CDCs as subnational governance (Nixon, 2008), inter and intra issues of the CDCs (Saltmarshe & Medhi, 2011), and some of the NSP evaluation reports. There have been fewer studies conducted on the role of the NSP in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in the country, and most of the evaluation reports discuss the quantitative progress of the program rather than the qualitative impacts. Therefore, this study intends to look at the

National Solidarity Program, specifically in a qualitative manner, to examine whether the NSP has been successful in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion among the rural population in Afghanistan through its participatory communication model. For this purpose, the researcher interviewed the main parties involved in the program that are CDCs, FPs, and community members. These interviews helped in developing and providing a systematic analysis of the collected data.

### **Significance of the Study**

This thesis examines the role of the participatory communication model in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion among people in Afghanistan. The NSP offers a broad learning process of democratic practices through its participatory approach (Boesen, 2004). This thesis studies the role of the participatory communication approach in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion by exploring the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan. This study focuses on the solidarity and social cohesion part of the program that has been the focus of fewer studies so far. Therefore, the study hopes to attain the Afghanistan government's and the NSP program's attention on the solidarity building part of the program. Solidarity and social cohesion are essential components of the program and important priorities of the government of Afghanistan for development and reconstruction of the country. The study highlights the success, weakness, challenges, and obstacles in front of the NSP program for strengthening solidarity and social cohesion and also hopes to help the government of Afghanistan and donor agencies in designing the coming phase of the NSP and other participatory and development driven projects in the country. Finally, the study opens areas for further research on solidarity and social cohesion in the country. Further, it can help in understanding the challenges and weaknesses of the program at the grassroots level.

## **Thesis Overview**

This thesis has six chapters. The introductory chapter briefly introduces the focus of the study followed by discussions on the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and the rationale for the study. This chapter also describes the significance of the study. The second chapter of the thesis provides a review of the existing literature, description of the key concepts of the study such as solidarity, social cohesion, participatory development, and participatory communication. Chapter two also describes the theoretical framework for the study. Further, the chapter discusses, briefly, Afghanistan and aid in Afghanistan, followed by a discussion on the World Bank in Afghanistan, the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and the National Solidarity Program. Describing each of these organizations is essential for the study because each of them is directly involved with the NSP.

The methodology used to conduct the research is discussed in Chapter three. Findings and analysis are reported in chapter four. Chapter five discusses the findings of the study and chapter six of the thesis offers conclusions, recommendations, limitations to the study, and suggests areas for future research.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This literature review is divided into four sections. This chapter discusses Afghanistan as a country, presents a profile of aid in Afghanistan, and provides a brief introduction to the National Solidarity Program, the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and the World Bank. It also describes participation, development, and participation in the context of Afghanistan, the theoretical framework, and the main concepts in the study (i.e., solidarity, social cohesion, and participatory communication).

## **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a land-locked country that is located between south and central Asia (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007). Ahmad Shah Durrani founded the country in 1747 (Murtazashvili, 2009) and until 1747, it never ruled as one country (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007). The country won its independence from British control in August 19, 1919 (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007).

Afghanistan is linked to the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan in the north and northwest. To the south and east, Afghanistan is neighbored with Pakistan, in the east with China, and in the west with Iran. Wardak (2004) assumes that Afghanistan, due to its geo-political location, has been a crossroad of civilization and a battlefield between global and regional powers.

There has been no accurate population count conducted in Afghanistan (Misdaq, 2006, as cited in Noorzai, 2006) but the Central Intelligence Agency (2012) estimated the population of the country, as of July 2012, to be 30 million. Various ethnic and tribal groups are part of this population (Wardak, 2004). Murtazashvili (2009) describes Afghanistan as a diverse state where a number of ethnic and religious groups live. According to Saikal (2004), about 34 different ethnic groups exist in Afghanistan. These ethnic and tribal groups, states Wardak (2004), include Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Aimaq, Baluch, Brahui, Noristani, Pashaie, Pamiri, Kirghiz, Qizilbash, Mangols, Arabs, Gujars, Kohistanis, Wakhis, and Jats. 80% of Afghanistan's population live in rural areas of the country (Noorzai, 2006). Afghanistan is an Islamic republic where majority of the people practice Islam, but there are other minor religious groups too, such as Hindus, Christians, and Jews (Nyrop & Seekins, 1986).

These different ethnic groups in Afghanistan have worked and lived together for years. They were and are brought together through different institutions such as universities, governmental institutions, military services, and religious, social, and trade activities (Wardak, 2004). In spite of having a diverse ethno-linguistic structure, villages in Afghanistan have much in common (Murtazashvili, 2009).

There are two official languages spoken in Afghanistan, Pashto and Dari. Both languages are spoken widely among people. Afghanistan has 34 provinces and Kabul is the capital city. The country has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world (MoWA & UNFPA, 2008). According to a UNICEF fact sheet (2011), the adult literacy above age 15 is 39%, among which 13% are females.

The rural life of the country has a collective structure (Noorzai, 2006). A village consists of several small mud houses where families live together in a collective manner (Emadi, 2005, as cited in Noorzai, 2006). Murtazashvili (2009) explains that a village in Afghanistan is not solely described by its territory and population but also by institutional characteristics that it exemplifies. Livestock and agriculture are the main sources of income of the rural population (Noorzai, 2006). In a village, members share the existing facilities such as water well, mosque, mills, and so on (Noorzai, 2006). Wardak (2003, as cited in Noorzai, 2006) demonstrates that issues and matters in rural areas are mostly taken care of by the Jirga<sup>3</sup> and that the central Afghan government does not have a visible presence there.

Since the Soviet Union invasion in Afghanistan in 1979, the country became a battlefield for different regional and international powers such as Russia, USA, Pakistan and, most recently, Al Qaida (Wardak, 2004). These powers, in order to compete and defeat their rivals, used

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<sup>3</sup> Jirga is a local conflict resolution body that has community elders as members and they come together when there is an issue or matter to be resolved in community (Wardak, 2004).

Afghans and created their war factions (Wardak, 2004). These war factions were supported financially by these powers, which, as a result, exploited the ethnic and religious composition of Afghanistan, and destroyed the economic, political, and social structure of the country (Wardak, 2004).

**Aid in Afghanistan.** Today Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries of the world and relies on international aid (IMF, 2012). Afghanistan has always been dependent on international aid (Weinbaun, 2004) has always needed external support to sustain the state's finance. Afghanistan received its initial external fund, to preserve internal political stability, through a British subsidy (Goodhand, 2002). However, King Amanullah Khan, during his rule, made several attempts to develop the economy of the country by levying taxes on peoples' incomes and properties (Totakhail, 2011). Still, the domestic revenues were not enough to fulfill the financial needs of the country; therefore, the king pursued assistance from major donor countries of that time (Pain & Goodhand, 2002).

According to Edwards (1986, as cited in Noorzai, 2006), the government policies, by King Daud Khan, were to increase international assistance. In the meanwhile, Rubin (2002, as cited in Noorzai, 2006) explains foreign grants covered 80% of development projects in the country and the government was not able to even cover the remaining 20% of the cost. According to the World Bank (2001), during the cold war era Afghanistan became a large foreign aid recipient country.

In the 1960s, foreign aid accounted for more than 40% of the state's budget (Goodhand, 2002). Although, the western development programs were terminated after the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, the Russian government continued its support by providing substantial resources and subsidies (Goodhand, 2002). Furthermore, the amount of aid resources from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) increased, which helped Afghanistan to develop its

infrastructure and to grow its private investments. For example, in the decade of 1970s, the amount of loan that Afghanistan received from the USSR stood at \$ 11 billion (Donor Management Unit, 2010).

With the collapse of President Dr. Najibullah's regime in 1992, foreign assistance to Afghanistan was officially stopped (Totakhail, 2011). But again, with the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the international community started funding developmental and construction programs in the country (Noorzai, 2006). Since then, assistance pledged to Afghanistan by the international community has been around U.S. \$ 90 billion for the period of 2002-2013 in the forms of loans, financial grants, in-kind, and/or technical assistance (Donor Cooperation Report, 2010).

The aid money has been spent in different sectors such as development, education, health, infrastructures, and other sectors. Afghanistan receives funding from many international donors. Table 1 lists the top ten donors to Afghanistan since 2001.

**Table 1**

**Top ten donors for Afghanistan**

|                             |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 1. United States of America | 6. World Bank  |
| 2. Japan                    | 7. Germany     |
| 3. European Union           | 8. India       |
| 4. Asian Development Bank   | 9. Canada      |
| 5. United Kingdom           | 10. Netherland |

*Source: Donors Cooperation Report (2010).*

**The National Solidarity Program**

The National Solidarity Program (NSP) is a community-driven-development program in Afghanistan that gives the ownership to the local communities for their development activities

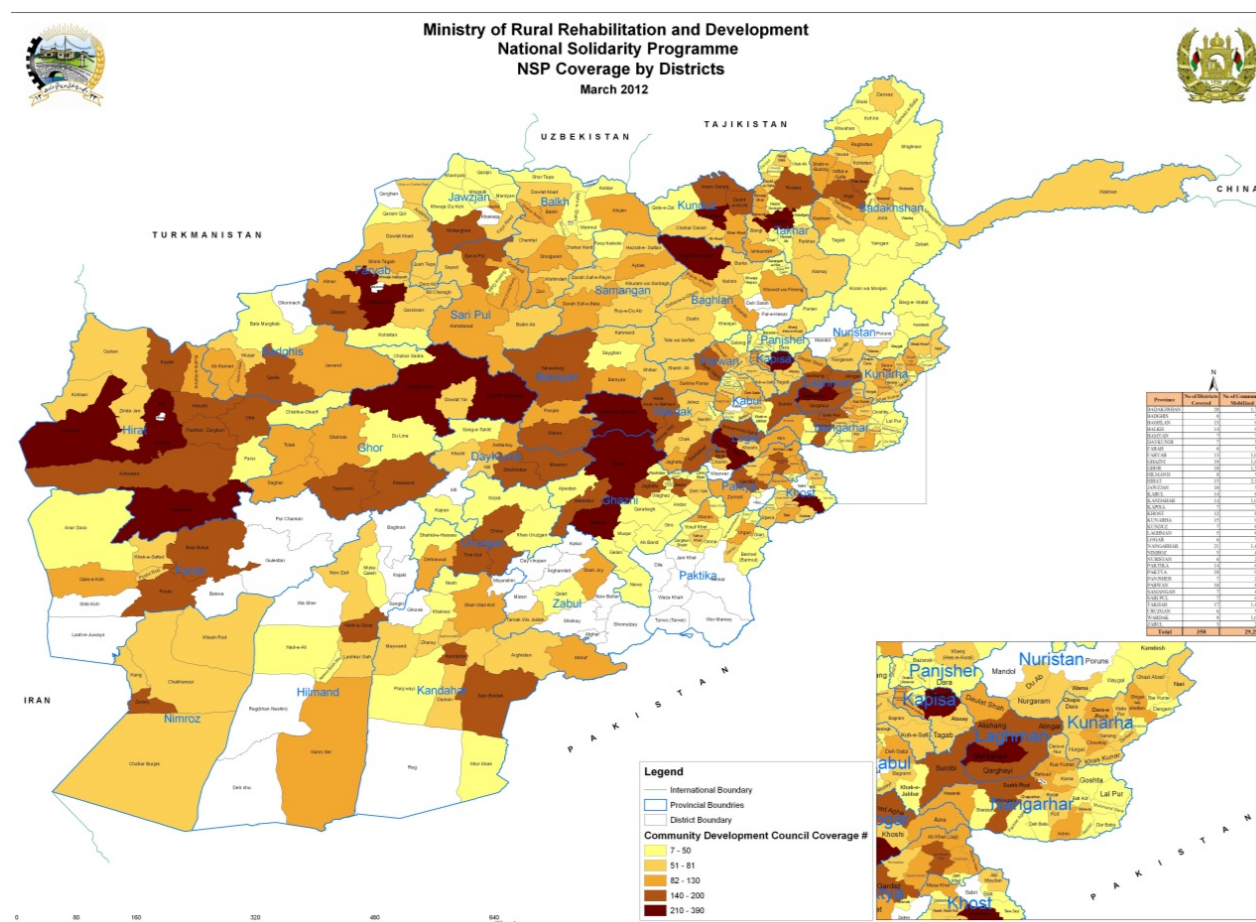
(National Solidarity Program, 2012). The National Solidarity Program [in Dari: *Hambastagi Milli*; in Pashto: *Milli Paiwastoon*] was created in mid-2003 (Torabi, 2007). The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) leads the program with initial financial support of the World Bank (Boesen, 2004; Murtazashvili, 2009; Torabi, 2007). In 2001, after the fall of the Taliban the established transitional government and its international partners recognized the need to be visible to the rural population, which encompasses 80% of the country's population, to get their support (Torabi, 2007). Therefore, the Afghan government and international community designed the National Solidarity Program (NSP) in a way to reach the proposed objective and to interact with the rural population, gain their support and trust, and involve them in the rehabilitation process of the country (Torabi, 2007). Murtazashvili (2009) argues that the MRRD has gained the international donors support for the program by advertising the need for social capital<sup>4</sup> to build among people in rural areas.

The NSP, according to SIGAR (2011), is currently working in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan and has covered 91% of the country through its projects. The NSP employs over 800 Afghans in its headquarters in Kabul and in provincial offices (SIGAR, 2011). Figure 1 shows the NSP coverage in Afghanistan.

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<sup>4</sup> Narayan (1999) defines social capital as, “the norms and social relations embedded in the social structures of a society that enable people to co-ordinate action and to achieve desired goals” (p.6).

### Map showing the NSP coverage in Afghanistan



*Source: National Solidarity Program website (<http://www.nspafghanistan.org>)*

Maynard (2007) argues that the NSP is designed in a way that promotes solidarity among people. According to the National Solidarity Program operational manual VI (2011), the National Solidarity Program is designed based on the Afghan tradition of “*ASHAR*,<sup>5</sup>” which articulates collective work of community members on a voluntary basis for the infrastructural development of their community. The National Solidarity Program (2012) also states that the NSP is formed on Islamic values of unity, equality, and justice.

<sup>5</sup> Concept of ‘Ashar’ refers to working together voluntarily (Torabi, 2007).

The development objective of the NSP, described in the National Solidarity Program operational manual VI (2011), is “to build, strengthen, and maintain Community Development Councils [a democratically elected council by community members] as an effective institution for local governance and social economic development” (p.11). The National Solidarity Program (2012) claims that through the NSP people come together and decide for their communities and participate in the development projects of their communities. Boesen (2004) believes that the NSP has changed the face of development in Afghanistan. He further argues that the NSP has expanded the scale of community driven development activities at the national level (Boesen, 2004).

The concept of the NSP is based on direct block grant: a specific amount allocated by the government to communities for rural rehabilitation projects (Torabi, 2007). The government has had a limited role in implementing the NSP (Torabi, 2007). The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), who is in charge of the program, has appointed Facilitating Partners (FPs) or implementing partners, and Oversight Consultants (OC) to carry out the facilitation under the World Bank procedures (Torabi, 2007). The World Bank is involved in the NSP through the administration of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).

The main idea in the design of the NSP gave a sense of *déjà vu* (Torabi, 2007). Such programs have been designed and implemented in many other countries for the reconstruction purposes. In Rwanda and East Timor, this model was implemented as a participatory peace-building program (Torabi, 2007). However, Torabi (2007) believes that the East Timor project was not as successful due to its structure that opposed social and local norms of communities.

Torabi (2007) explains that the Afghan National Solidarity Program (NSP) had strong input from local authorities throughout the design and implementation. The head of MRRD at

the time, Mr. Hanif Atmar, played a significant role in designing the program (Torabi, 2007). Mr. Atmar had experience in rural development in Afghanistan through working with international organizations and non-governmental organization (NGOs) (Torabi, 2007). Further, Mr. Atmar's academic background made him remain sensitive to local voices during the design and implementation of the program (Torabi, 2007). As described by Torabi (2007), the whole program was designed in a way to enable participation among people. The NSP offers a participatory approach with the assistance of international organizations and local NGOs to serve communities and perform development activities (Gupta, Grandvoinnet, & Romani, 2004). The NSP encourages communities to participate in the decision-making and implementation of the development projects in their communities (Nixon, 2008).

The NSP has two stated objectives, first, the program supports communities' input in the selection and implementation of development and reconstruction projects through the formation of the Community Development Councils (CDCs); second, the program lays the foundation of the sub-national governance in the country (Nixon, 2008). The NSP established its Community Development Councils (CDCs) in order to involve communities in decision-making and the planning of development and reconstruction projects according to community priorities in a collective agreement (Boesen, 2004). Murtazashvili (2009) claims, CDCs are the most important, effective, and widespread non-customary organization in Afghanistan. He further describes that CDCs are to assist local governance and development (Murtazashvili, 2009). As demonstrated by Nagl, Exum, and Humayin (2009), CDCs receive grants from donor agencies and the Afghan government. Meanwhile, communities are also required to contribute, at least 10 % of the project's cost in the forms of labour, cash, or other means (National Solidarity Program, 2009).

The National Solidarity Program (2012) claims that to date the NSP has been one of the most successful projects in Afghanistan. It is the largest development program in the country and

second largest in the world (Kakar, 2005). The NSP is the Afghan government's only program that functions almost all over the country (Nagl, Exum & Humayin, 2009; SIGAR, 2011). The NSP, from 2002 to 2009, has been able to establish 22,166 Community Development Councils (CDCs) in the country (Cookman & Wadhams, 2010). According to the National Solidarity Program operational manual VI (2011), NSP III intends to cover around 39,200 rural communities in the country.

The NSP is implemented in three phases (National Solidarity Program, 2012). Each phase took a period of four years (National Solidarity Program, 2012). NSP I was implemented from May 2003 to March 2007, NSP II from April 2007 to September 2011, and NSP III started in September 2010, and will continue to September 2015 (SIGAR, 2011). SIGAR (2011) divides the NSP activities into four categories:

- 1- Governance: The NSP assists communities in establishing local-governance by electing Community Development Councils (CDC) through a democratic process. CDCs are responsible to reach a consensus on prioritizing and developing projects.
- 2- Capacity Building: The NSP builds CDCs' and community members' capacity to empower them with skills such as consensus building, financial management, operation, maintenance, and monitoring.
- 3- Community Block Grant: The NSP provides direct block grants to communities, which is a certain amount of grant allocated to each community to fund their selected projects approved by the NSP; and
- 4- Linkages and Service Provision: The NSP aims to link communities with government to increase their support and trust in the government.

The National Solidarity Program is designed in a way to enable participation, collective decision-making, and communication among community members (National Solidarity Program,

2012). The design of the NSP ensures community involvement in every process (National Solidarity Program, 2012).

According to the NSP operational manual V (2005), a community is eligible for the NSP direct blocks if it consists of 25 families. The NSP encourages communities with less than 25 families to form a CDC with a neighbouring community to qualify for the direct block grant. Thus, after identifying the community and number of families in the community, the Facilitating Partner (FP) organizes a wide community meeting to introduce the NSP to the community members and provide information about its goals, objectives, implementation process, the formation of CDC, and responsibilities of the CDC members (National Solidarity Program operational manual VI, 2011). Once the community forms its CDC the members, with the support and guidance of the FP, conduct a basic assessment in order to understand their community's needs and arrange a list of projects (National Solidarity Program operational manual VI, 2011). The proposed list is then announced to the community to come up with five important and prior projects according to the community's needs (National Solidarity Program operational manual VI, 2011). Community members decide the projects by voting (National Solidarity Program, 2012). For joint projects with neighbouring villages or communities the CDCs are required to consult each other and identify joint priorities of both communities. If one of the communities do not have a CDC the elders of that community act as representatives of the community (National Solidarity Program, 2012).

According to the National Solidarity Program website (2012), the NSP has achieved four main outcomes since its start:

- 1- Improvement of social cohesion among people by increasing collective decision-making and action;
- 2- Betterment of the economic welfare of the people;

- 3- Empowerment of the population, especially inclusion of women in the decision-making process; and
- 4- Improvement in community's trust in the government.

The National Solidarity Program (2012) argues that by forming democratically elected community councils that concord with the local traditions of the country provides an opportunity to rebuild relationships at grassroots levels.

**The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.** The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) first began as the Rural Department Commission under the umbrella of the Afghan Ministry of Commerce in 1954 (MRRD, 2012). In 1956 this commission became an independent office under the Prime Minister's office (MRRD, 2012). Later the name of the commission changed to the Rural Directorate and went under the Afghan Ministry of Interior in 1966 (MRRD, 2012). In 1969, the commission dissolved and in 1970 it again started its work as the Rural Development Office; the office was again dissolved in 1984 (MRRD, 2012). After changing names several times and being under different authorities, finally, the government established the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) in 1988, but security conditions, war, and low human and institutional resources limited its activities (MRRD, 2012). With the establishment of the transitional government in 2001 in Afghanistan the MRRD started its activities with new mandates, policies, and strategies (MRRD, 2012). The MRRD staff members who are responsible for the NSP implementation consists of 600 employees (national staff), two international staffs, and 34 provincial management units (World Bank annual report, 2009, as cited in Merchant, 2010).

The MRRD describes its vision as, "a healthy, poverty free and opium free Afghanistan, based on independence, democratic governance, self-reliability, and equitable development" (MRRD, 2012, Para.2). The mission statement reflects the goal, "to ensure the social, economic,

and political well-being of rural society, especially poor and vulnerable people, through the provision of basic services, strengthening local governance and promoting sustainable livelihood free from a dependency on illicit poppy cultivation” (MRRD, 2012, Para.4).

The MRRD was the lead ministry to design and implement the NSP program (Torabi, 2007). According to Torabi (2007), the MRRD, throughout its history, “has not been engaged in a countrywide provision of public goods and especially in such a participatory manner” (p. 12). The NSP covers a large part of the MRRD work; therefore, the ministry created a new department of Community-Led Development (Torabi, 2007). According to Torabi (2007), the NSP has assisted the MRRD as a pull-factor in monitoring capacity building and accountability. In order to function according to the NSP requirements, reforms have been brought to the MRRD at the national and provincial levels (Torabi, 2007). The MRRD has been the only governmental institution that has independent procurement while other ministries have to pass through the Afghanistan Reconstruction and Development Services (ARDS) for their procurements (Torabi, 2007).

As mentioned previously, the MRRD has the responsibility for the overall NSP program, including its policy formulation, direction, overseeing, and managing implementation. A steering committee that includes representatives from the MRRD and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) carries out these functions (Torabi, 2007).

**The World Bank in Afghanistan.** The World Bank is one of the major donors to Afghanistan (Waldman, 2008). Afghanistan became a member of the World Bank group in 1955 (World Bank, 2001). Since then, the World Bank has been providing technical and financial support to Afghanistan (World Bank, 2001). But right after the Soviet invasion in 1979, the Bank suspended its operations in the country (World Bank, 2011). Although the World Bank closed its

office in Afghanistan, the support to the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan continued through the Bank's office in Pakistan (World Bank, 2011).

Before 1979, the World Bank provided 21 no-interest loans known as credits to Afghanistan in different sectors including education, roads construction, and agriculture (World Bank, 2011). With the fall of the Taliban in May 2002, the World Bank resumed its operations to meet the immediate needs of the poorest people of Afghanistan (World Bank, 2011).

To date, The World Bank has committed over \$2.3 billion for development and emergency reconstruction projects to Afghanistan (World Bank, 2011). The support from the World Bank comprises over \$1.9 billion in grants and \$436.4 million as credits. As of August 2011, the World Bank has 25 active projects in Afghanistan with net commitments of over \$1 billion (World Bank, 2011). The World Bank is currently supporting Afghanistan in four main sectors:

- Governance and capacity building;
- Economic growth and infrastructure;
- Human resources development; and
- Agriculture and rural development (World Bank, 2011).

The World Bank strategy for Afghanistan focuses on three areas of support:

- Building the capacity and accountability of the state;
- Promoting growth of the rural economy and promoting rural livelihood; and
- Supporting growth of a formal, modern, and competitive private sector (World Bank, 2008).

One of the most successful initiatives, jointly, by the World Bank and the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development is the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan. As mentioned previously, the World Bank is associated with the NSP program

through the administration of a funding pool of Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). After the fall of the Taliban, the Afghan government and aid agencies agreed to establish a cooperative financing mechanism to ensure coherent and coordinated reconstruction efforts (Raouf Zai, 2009). As the result, in April 2002, the World Bank, with the support of 20 donor countries, established the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) (Raouf Zai, 2009). The World Bank has a Team Task Leader in Kabul who is in charge of the NSP program (Torabi, 2007).

### **Participation and Development**

The study aims to examine the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan by looking at the case of the National Solidarity Program. The NSP, as mentioned previously, is a community-driven-development program that promotes participation at grassroots level; therefore, it is important to understand the concepts of participation and development and how participation is seen throughout the history in Afghanistan. The study provides a brief description on both concepts as follows:

**Development.** The concept of development emerged broadly in the present era more than ever before (Payne & Philips, 2012). Development is a wide concept that includes social, political, economic, and human development (Diale, 2009). Bellú (2011) describes development as “implicitly intended as something positive or desirable” (p. 2). He further states, if the term development is referring to a society or to a social economic system it is usually interpreted as “improvement” (Bellú, 2011, p. 2).

According to Payne and Phillips (2010), the term development is now more widely used in public discourse than ever in its history and, therefore, it needs greater analysis and understanding. Todaro and Smith (2006, as cited in Nault, n.d.) describe development as “a

social process of improving the quality of all human lives” (p.2). According to Bellú (2011), development is a multi-dimensional concept. Nault (n.d.) further describes that development is a social procedure that concentrates on both physical and psychological welfare of a larger sections of a population. Todaro and Smith (2006, as cited in Diale, 2009) believe, through development a society ensures growth in wealth, mental status, and quality of life of all people. Todaro and Smith (2006) argument shows that development is not only a material growth but also growth in psychological well-being and quality of living among people. Coetzee (2001, as cited in Diale, 2009) states, livelihood, security, and sustainability are the basics of development.

Development, as an extensive concept, is studied to understand economic growth and social development (Diale, 2009). Edwards (1993, as cited in Diale, 2009) argues, “economic growth may bring material gain to the people, but development is much about enrichment of the lives of all the people in the society” (p. 1). Development means to liberate human potential so that they could have full control over resources to meet their basic human needs (Diale, 2009). Therefore, a community has to decide their development rather than an outside party (Diale, 2009). This argument of Diale (2009) demonstrates that development should be a participatory approach by people, for people, and to people.

**Participatory development.** Failures of development programmes during the 1950s derived social activists and field workers attention to concerned population that did not benefit from development projects (shah & Baporikar, 2012). Considerations were that the lack of local people’s participation caused these disappointments (shah & Baporikar, 2012). AWARD (2008, as cited in shah & Baporikar, 2012) states that involvement of local people in projects would have helped in having positive outcomes. The international community identified the lack of active participation of poor people as the reason for the failure of the development programs in the World Conference of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) in the 1979

(FAO, 1990, as cited in Shah & Baporikar, 2012; De Campos Guimarães, 2009). The notion of participatory development arose to address these disappointments (Shah & Baporikar, 2012).

The concept of participation or bottom-up approach in development has become increasingly popular and trendy (Shah & Baporikar, 2012). The term participation, recently, has become the focus of practitioners and policy makers in the discourse of rural development (De Campos Guimarães, 2009). De Campos Guimarães (2009) tracks the notion of participation in development to the colonial times. According to him the central themes of participatory development were seen in the modern views of 1940s and 1950s (De Campos Guimarães, 2009). Likewise, Freire (1972, as cited in De Campos Guimarães, 2009) explains that the modern participatory approach in development was enriched with some other themes such as:

- 1- Increasing the awareness of the poor and oppressed of asymmetric power relations and of their own situation;
- 2- Creating or reinforcing networks of solidarity;
- 3- Gradually building up their confidence in their own knowledge and abilities; and
- 4- A sense of entitlement (p. 5).

Participatory approach allows people at local levels to adopt and develop skills to implement, coordinate, and manage development projects (Shah & Baporikar, 2012).

The origin of participation, according to Shah and Baporikar (2012), is found in ancient Greek. Shah and Baporikar (2012) describe that according to Aristotle, citizens' participation is essential in state's development. After WW II the US and other developed nations assisted underdeveloped nations to manage the gap between these nations (Shah & Baporikar, 2012). Participation's popularity, according to Michener (1998, as cited in Shah & Baporikar, 2012), started in 1970s. Stated in UNDP (1997, as cited in Shah & Baporikar, 2012), community development gained interest during 1950s and 1960s; therefore, "national programs were

announced to build community infrastructure and to break down communities' exclusion from development activities" (p. 115). People's participation in development activities can contribute to the achievement of four main objectives that are efficiency, effectiveness, empowerment, and equality (Saxena, 1998, as cited in Shah & Baporikar, 2012).

According to Mohan (2001), there is no universal definition for participatory development; what exist are different ideologies that present the broader goal of participatory development. Alkire (2002) defines participation as, "the process of discussion, information gathering, implementation, and evaluation of the group(s) directly affected by an activity" (pp. 129-130). The FAO website (accessed February, 2013) defines participation in development as:

A process of equitable and active involvement of all stakeholders in the formulation of development policies and strategies and in the analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development activities. To allow for a more equitable development process, disadvantaged stakeholders need to be empowered to increase their level of knowledge, influence and control over their own livelihoods, including development initiatives affecting them (Para. 3).

Asian Development Bank (1996, as cited in Ondrik, n.d.) defines participatory development in its framework for mainstreaming participatory development processes into the Bank's operations as, "a process through which stakeholders can influence and share control over development initiatives, and over the decisions and resources that affect themselves" (p. 1). Participation in developing goals, plans, and implementing an activity empowers the stakeholders and promotes a sense of ownership among people (Ondrik, n.d.). Dipholo (2002) believes that "the new paradigm [of development] seeks to promote indigenous knowledge" (p. 64). Participatory development is not only a process where an underdeveloped nation develops, but is a process by people of an underdeveloped nation where they work and decide for themselves (Dipholo, 2002).

### **Participation in the Context of Afghanistan**

Given that, the phenomena of participation and participatory approach are new and recently received the attention of major developmental organizations in rural development (Guimarães, 2009); therefore, there is a lack of literature on the history of participation in Afghanistan before the decades of war and conflict.

Community level participation in decision-making and development processes has little history in Afghanistan (Boesen, 2004). However, since 1960, the government of Afghanistan introduced the trends of democracy in the country; these trends of democracy were mostly imposed on local people (Grevemeyer, 1987, as cited in Boesen, 2004). Cookman and Wadhams (2010) argue that since 1747 the creation of a modern Afghanistan, there was a gap and continuous stiffness between the central government and the countryside local level structures. Even today this gap and stiffness is visible in the efforts taken by the newly established government in realigning those local groups and structures in the development and rehabilitation process (Cookman & Wadhams, 2010). Noozai (2006) also argues that until the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan reforms did not have communities' involvement; therefore, most of the time, these reforms were conflicting with the culture and traditional values of the people. Afghanistan always had a centralized and bureaucratic government with a one-way, informing system where communities had no involvement in any process (Boesen, 2004). However, in order to connect people with the government, there was a mediator called Malik (community head) (Boesen, 2004). Decades of conflict in Afghanistan increased this gap between the rural populations and the government (Boesen, 2004). The rural populations lost their trust in the central government due to the unfulfilled promises and domination (Boesen, 2004).

However, a local conflict revolutionary body, Jirga, exists in Afghanistan, especially, among Pashtun tribes, which at certain times functions as a nation-wide gathering (Boesen, 2004). Jirga, according to Noorzai (2006), is an organized institution in communities. According to Saman (2008), Jirgas and Shuras, as traditional conflict revolutionary institutions, are deeply embedded in the Afghan culture, and they exist all over the country, but differ according to region and tribe. Noorzai (2006) further describes that Jirga, in most cases, play a judicial role in communities. Jirgas decide and resolve issues in communities or among families in the presence of community members (Rawan, 2002, as cited in Noorzai, 2006). Still, it is not a fully participatory model because it only includes men in its structure, and women have never been part of this institution (Boesen, 2004). Women are always represented by their male community members (Murtazashvili, 2009). Nevertheless, according to Noorzai (2006), Jirgas are a good source of information sharing.

Noorzai (2006) argues that Afghanistan, throughout different governments, had centralized reforms that did not involve local people's perspectives. The high-level authorities or the former Soviet Union planned and designed the reforms without involving people which most of the time contradicted the culture and traditional values of people. Dasgupta (2009) also argues that for any development initiative it is important to understand its target population. Nixon and Ponzio (2007) assert that the modernization process of Afghanistan started during Abdul Rahman Khan (1880-1901). Abdul Rahman Khan managed to spread his influence through many ethnic groups and tribal kingdoms (Nixon and Ponzio, 2007). Nixon and Ponzio (2007) further argue that the modernization process in Afghanistan went through many twists and turns in the following decades; the conservative groups opposed the process for the prevention of a modern Afghan state. King Amanullah in 1920s and communists in 1980s failed to design reforms that could meet the traditional and cultural interests of the Afghan people (Nixon & Ponzio, 2007).

The National Solidarity Program, for the first time, initiated community participation (Noorzai, 2006). Torabi (2007) traces the establishment of the National Solidarity Program back to 2002. Torabi (2007) argues that President Hamid Karzai considered elimination of corruption through participation of people; he emphasized people's participation and unity in every aspect of development in the country. Torabi (2007) quotes president Karzai as follows:

The elimination of corruption is one of my priorities. We need an effective central government that re-establishes the national unity of the country on the basis of strong institutions and the rule of law. Simultaneously, we are likewise committed to building community level participation and management (Tokyo Conference paper, 2002, as cited in Torabi, 2007, p.12).

The World Bank emphasizes four main factors that can support the development process in Afghanistan:

1. Security;
2. Governance and participation;
3. Social economic well-being; and
4. Justice and reconciliation (Noorzai, 2006, p. 99).

Noorzai (2006) argues that the National Solidarity Program (NSP) is a community-driven development program that allows communities to decide for themselves and plan and implement their own development projects. The National Solidarity Program forms community councils in order to promote development decisions on grassroots levels and build communities' capacity through instruction and participation (Noorzai, 2006). Participation is the main objective of the program (Noorzai, 2006). In the National Solidarity Program participation does not mean to own or only to run the project but also to design, provide labour, and contribute (Noorzai, 2006). As mentioned previously, the National Solidarity Program is based on the concept and tradition of "Ashar" (Kakar, 2005; Torabi, 2007). Therefore, the NSP requires community members to

contribute, at least, 10 percent of a project through labour, cash, or in kind (National Solidarity Program, 2012).

Community Development Councils (CDC), established by the NSP, has both male and female members, and women's participation in CDCs are essential (Maynard, 2007).

Communities decide themselves, according to their convenience, about having two separate CDCs for men and women, or one CDC consisting of both men and women (Noorzai, 2006), yet women's participation remains important.

The NSP's participatory approach is a new practice in Afghanistan. Throughout its history, people in Afghanistan have not been involved and engaged in economic, social, and political development but the NSP claims to provide this opportunity to the people. Working together, collectiveness, and consulting about different issues in a community and village are cultural and religious values present in Afghanistan. However, these values were not practiced before for the development of communities. By initiating the NSP program in the country the government of Afghanistan took a step to promote participation in all aspects in the country. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to look at the role of participation in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan. To better understand the issue, development communication theory is used as a theoretical framework to help guide the study. To have a broader understanding, the concepts of development and participatory development are also briefly described along with the theoretical framework.

### **Women's Participation in Afghanistan**

Women have always been a marginalized group in Afghanistan. Different rulers, throughout the history of Afghanistan, tried to improve their quality of life (Nemat, 2011) but according to Ahmed-Ghosh (2003), they have not been able to achieve the goal of improving

women's situation in the country. Amir Abdur Rahman Khan's efforts to modernize Afghanistan included reforms to improve women's state in the country by recognizing their human rights (Nemat, 2011). Marriage of a widow by force was banned and declared illegal, marriage age for women was raised, women were given the right to divorce, and share in property (Nemat, 2011; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003). Although, the entire population was not affected by those reforms but according to Nemat (2011), they were the "landmark steps towards modernization in Afghanistan and improvements in the status of women" (p. 5). Women's participation in political and social spheres was first seen among royal families; for example, women from king Amanullah family participated in public services in the country (Nemat, 2011). According to Nemat (2011), Amanullah Khan's reforms to liberate women provoked the fundamental tribal leaders.

However, Ahmed- Ghosh (2003) argues, although, there were efforts to improve women's situation in the country, women in rural areas of Afghanistan were not affected by those modernization reforms. Long years of war and conflict in Afghanistan affected women's participation in all sector of education, politics, economic, and social affairs (Nemat, 2011). Women, mostly in rural areas, were not able to attend school and universities due to security concerns and ongoing conflict in the country (Nemat, 2011). During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, women and girls were deprived of their basic rights. They were prevented from participating in any sphere of social and political life (Nemat, 2011). Despite all those restrictions, Afghan women, though a very small number, in urban areas of the country, did make efforts to gain their positions in society. Therefore, even under the Taliban regime, some women were running home-based schools (Nemat, 2011).

Ahmed-Ghosh (2003) states that Afghanistan has always had elite and middle class women and they often raised their voice to advocate for their rights. Despite all the efforts made

by women activists and government throughout history, women in rural areas did not benefit from the reforms. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam (n.d.) stated in the NSP gender report that Afghan women have always been involved in community activities, but gradually their roles are dying out and Afghan men often believe that women have no role to perform in society.

The National Solidarity Program (NSP), as stated by Kakar (2005), “supports the principle of universal suffrage and prioritizes the inclusion of women in the both election of CDCs and decision-making through these bodies” (p. 4). However, Calder and Hakimi (2009) believe that women’s participation in the NSP is one of the most difficult and challenging issues. They further explain that, “many studies point to the severe challenges of engendering full participation of women in culturally conservative Afghanistan, but find progress nonetheless” (p. 22). Women’s participation is an essential component of the NSP (National Solidarity Program, 2012). Azarbaijani-Moghaddam (n.d.) describes, the NSP policy promotes women’s participation in the program in order to encourage women inclusion. Meanwhile, Boesen (2004) states, “women participation in the NSP is a very sensitive and difficult issue in most communities and district” (p. 48). CARE (2010) report on women’s participation in the NSP illustrates that physical security limits the rights and conditions of women in Afghanistan. Security problems affect women’s mobility, which restricts their movement out of homes and their access to education, work, and other services (CARE, 2010). Azarbaijani-Moghaddam (n.d.) believes that although most of the times security is cited as the justification for exclusion of women from the NSP, it is not the actual reason. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam (n.d.) further states, “security is not always the correct concern and that it is at times a very convenient excuse to exclude women” (p. VIII).

Calder and Hakimi (2010) elucidate that the NSP has taken serious steps to ensure women's participation in the program by obeying the culture of Purdah.<sup>6</sup> Looking at different studies it is found that not every province and district in Afghanistan opposes women's participation, for example, a study, conducted in Kabul province, by Echavez (2012) demonstrated that the NSP was successful to raise awareness among men and women that helped women to participate actively in all the processes of the program. Similarly, another study by Echavez (2010) in Parwan province shows that the NSP effectively resulted in women's participation. She further states, CDCs have provided opportunities for women that were not available in the past (2010).

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Development Communication**

The term development communication is also referred to as communication for development and communication for social change (Mefalopulos & World Bank, 2008). Nora Quebral first used the term development communication in 1970 (Srampickal, 2006). Wilkins (2008) states, "development communication refers to a process of strategic intervention towards social change, initiated, and engaged by organizations and communities" (p.1). Development communication theory originates from two theories, development and social change (Waisbord, 2001).

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<sup>6</sup> Calder and Hakimi (2010) defines Purdah as, "the custom in some Muslim and Hindu cultures of keeping women separate from and unseen by men to whom they are not related" (p. 17).

The field of development communication arose significantly in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, as cited in Noorzai, 2006). Different organizations and government agencies adopt development communication approaches to encourage behavioural changes from individual to community levels (USAID, 2010).

With the end of the World Wars, the discourse of alignment to west or east become worthless, and breaking down of the notions of first, second, and third world created a need for a new concept of development that could emphasize cultural identity and multidimensionality (Servaes, 2002). Different concepts such as ‘another development’ (i.e., people centered development), ‘sustainable development,’ and ‘multiplicity’ are now popular in the discourse of development (Mefalopulos & World Bank, 2008). Similarly, after World War II the world’s developed nations focused on supporting under-developed nations by providing aid and assistance in different sectors (McPhail, 2009). During this period developed nations considered development communication to be dominant in improving the economic and social aspects of those living in underdeveloped states (McPhail, 2009).

The concept of development was embedded in modernizing underdeveloped countries (Mefalopulos & World Bank, 2008). This discourse of development through modernizing was called the Dominant Paradigm of Modernization (Mefalopulos & World Bank, 2008). In the paradigm of modernization, the concept of development is linked to the discourse of economy and free market. And, communication is considered a tool to disseminate and send the messages and information related to economic and free market development to underdeveloped countries for the purpose of modernizing them (Melfalopulos & World Bank, 2008). In the paradigm of modernization the communication medium relied on a traditional one-way, sender-receiver, model (Mefalopulos & World Bank, 2008).

With a strong opposition to modernization, the dependency model, a new theoretical model rooted in political-economic viewpoints, emerged (Melfalopulos & World Bank, 2008). The dependency model criticizes modernization because it considers recipients of underdeveloped nations responsible for their underdevelopment, while ignoring external factors such as social, historical, and economic (Melfalopulos & World Bank, 2008). Even though dependency theory emphasized the importance of the link between communication and culture, the communication approach was still the traditional one-way, information dissemination model (Melfalopulos & World Bank, 2008).

When the modernization paradigm and the dependency theory failed to fulfill the needs in the development sector a new approach emerged that focused on people's participation (Melfalopulos & World Bank, 2008). Mitchell and Chman-Ruiz (2007, as cited in Dasgupta, 2009) state, "development communication is a client-oriented strategy, contributing a powerful set of tools for the success of development initiatives" (p.161). Development communication, according to Melkote and Steeves (2001, as cited in Noorzai, 2006), focuses on mutual agreement and resistance and must be correspondent with the history, culture, and tradition of the society, and be relevant to the political and societal structures of the community that it is implemented in. Many theorists like Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm, Paul Deutschmann, Walter Rostow, Everett Rogers, Luis Beltran, Michel Foucault, and agencies such as United Nations Department of Economic Affairs and UNESCO "looked at development issues, some cautiously, some critically, and others creatively" (McPhail, 2009, p. 8). The United Nations studies development communication from different aspects, and has become, "a major global stakeholder in development communication matter from both theoretical and applied perspectives" (p. 49). In 1965, the United Nations established United Nations Development

Program (UNDP) to cope with inequalities among countries (McPhail, 2009). The UNDP's aim is to lessen poverty and support development worldwide (McPhail, 2009).

Development communication intends to provide opportunity to voiceless populations to gain control over the decisions that affect their lives (Dasgupta, 2009). It also allows them to communicate efficiently to refine their lives as well as the nation-state they live in (McPhail, 2009). Development communication aims not only to inform those suffering from poverty and low literacy rates but also to persuade them to adopt the skills and knowledge provided to them (McPhail, 2009). Development communication places emphasis more a participatory approach of communication and development (Servaes, 2002).

Dasgupta (2009) argues that a development communication program, in order to be successful, requires better understanding of its target population. Including stakeholders' perspectives and interests helps better understanding of the important issues in a development program/project (Dasgupta, 2009). Similarly, Servaes (1996) states:

Given the social, cultural, economic, and often political nature of participatory projects and their deliberately collective nature, analysis in terms of individual, small group, or mass communication processes does not seem to be the most productive manner in which to address them. Perhaps this is why those working in the area of country development have devoted such a relatively large amount of effort here; they have conceptualized development as a community process naturally (p.19).

Development communication includes different approaches such as, "information dissemination, education and awareness raising, edutainment, community mobilization, behaviour change communication, social marketing, advocacy, communication for social change, and participatory communication" (USAID, 2010, p. 5).

## **Participatory Communication**

Singhal (2003, as cited in USAID, 2010) defines participatory communication as, “a dynamic, interactional, and transformative process of dialogue between people, groups, and institutions that enables people both individually and collectively to realize their full potential and be engaged in their own welfare” (p. 5). According to Stuart and Bery (1996, as cited in USAID, 2010), participatory communication is, “an exchange among individuals that values each person’s perspective and voice” (p. 5). Cornish and Dunn (2009) describe participatory communication as, “a continual process of dialogue, listening, learning, and action between people” (p. 667).

The term participatory communication is used and applied with a variety of functions and methods in almost every political, cultural, and social setting (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). According to Servaes (1996), adult education, community development, and development communication highly consider participatory communication.

In development projects, participation is the engagement of local people in the implementation or design phase or even in both phases (McPhail, 2009). Similarly, according to Servaes (1996), participation is vital in every decision-making process of the project. Participatory communication allows citizens to achieve goals, set by themselves, by creating and sharing information, experience, and desire (Cornish & Dunn, 2009). Paulo Freire (1983, as cited in Servaes, 2002) states, “[participation] is not the privilege of some few men (and women), but the right of every (wo)man. Consequently no one can say a true word alone” (pp. 12-13).

Participation requires a fair sharing of power in both politics and economy, which causes decrease in benefits of the group in power (Servaes, 1996). Cornish and Dunn (2009) believe that sharing knowledge through participatory communication at the grassroots level can affect authorities at policy levels in government. Cornish and Dunn (2009) further claim that

communication plays a significant role in bringing changes at the international, national, and community levels.

According to Kuyet (2011), people participate and stay committed to change organizations for multiple reasons such as shared goals, learn something new, and/or enjoy others company, but if the organization or institution does not fulfill either of these needs participants leave. If people think their ideas and work are more essential to the group they will stay and participate for longer (Keyut, 2011). Howell and Pearce (2001, as cited in Cornish & Dunn, 2009) describe that the ties and bonds, developed by working together, are seen as forms of solidarity or cooperation and integration that reunite individuals with mutual agreement to achieve a common goal. The participatory model does not impose ideas from outside on communities, but encourages community members' involvement to identify their needs and design programs accordingly (Morris, 2000, as cited in USAID, 2010).

According to Noorzai (2006), participatory communication helps in understanding the needs in knowledge, partnerships, and resources in order to build the level of trust among participants, accomplish the task, and sustain it.

Participatory communication emphasizes on listening to the local people and letting them speak for themselves rather than presented by a third party (McPhail, 2009). Participatory communication seeks to distribute benefits gained from development equally among all the members in a society (Dasgupta, 2009). According to McPhail (2009), the open communication approach of participatory communication builds trust and engages people in their own development. This model of communication requires a facilitator to assist community members in obtaining skills and potential, required for participation.

Noorzai (2006) argues that Afghanistan, due to its socioeconomic setting, has its own unique communication structure. Afghanistan uses Jirgas and mosques as communication means

(Noorzai, 2006). According to Melkote and Steeves (2001, as cited in Noorzai, 2006), communication is a strengthening force of economy and development. Noorzai (2006) further illustrates, “the social system is an important factor that forms and influences communication” (p.37).

The main principles of participation are active interaction, dialogue, and involvement between target populations. People must have a share in deciding for themselves (Dasgupta, 2009).

McPhail (2009) describes Paul Freire’s five key concepts of communication model:

- 1- Dialogue: the two-way communication between a developmental organization and people and within the organization itself;
- 2- Conscientization: power division and power sharing between an organization and population;
- 3- Praxis: refers to continuous investigation of theory and real world practice
- 4- Transformation: target population’s capacity building in order to enable them to think critically about their condition; and
- 5- Critical consciousness: active participation of a target population in all social and political aspects.

Freire argues (as cited in McPhail, 2009), considering the mentioned five key concepts in a development projects leads it to democratic communication.

McPhail (2009) justifies participatory communication as:

- 1- Information provided by indigenous population through participatory communication is relevant and essential in development projects;
- 2- Participation in development of their own community is the right of community members; and

- 3- Engaging a population in a program increases their support, which helps in achieving the goal of a project or program.

**Obstacles to participatory communication.** Participation can often pose challenges to existing structures and institutions in a society, which means it does not always entail support or harmony among actors (Servaes, 1996). Therefore, according to Servaes (1996),

Behavioural response to an exogenous stimulus or the passive reception of message from the elite is in our opinion not participation neither is participatory communication a strategy to make target audiences feel more involved and therefore, more acquiescent to manipulation agendas (p. 23).

Furthermore, participation involves redistribution of power at all levels, local and international; therefore, it may risk those power holders whose position or actual existence depends on power (Servaes, 1996).

According to Servaes (1996) participation should not be interpreted as the inclusion of the poor in government programs and services but to formulate the government programs and services according to the independent choice of the poor. Further, according to Karim (2004, as cited in Noorzai, 2006), the key barrier to participation, particularly in rural communities, is social and political structures and division of power; therefore, it is important for a participatory approach to work significantly and to ensure inclusion of every vulnerable group. Catius and Rüttinger (n.d.) also point out that participation can also have some risks. Catius and Rüttinger (n.d.) further illustrate that in post conflict societies too much local participation can marginalize the newly developing political institutions like parliament and political parties. Similarly, Dudwick and Nelsson (2008, as cited in Catius & Rüttinger, n.d.) explain that public participation can also cause social tensions and disturb reconciliation by offering a space to tons of unresolved conflicts and increases divisions in a society. Further, Catius and Rüttinger (n.d.)

argue that if the design and implementation of participation is in a way that stimulates public expectations, it can have dangerous outcomes if these expectations are not fulfilled.

The participatory model of development communication promotes a bottom-up approach of communication, information exchange, and dialogue at the community level (Morris, 2000, as cited in USAID, 2010). The participatory model is less concerned with the political-economic element and more focuses on the cultural realities of development (Mohan, 2001). Servaes (1999, as cited in Servaes, 2004) states, modernization and participation are two major components in development. Participatory approach of development communication proposes small, need-driven, participatory, and culturally appropriate projects (Noorzai, 2006). According to Melfalopulos and World Bank (2008), participation cannot occur without communication.

Noorzai (2006) states, “mass communication exists in every society” (p. 35). Today the view about communication has changed. In the 1970s and 1980s communication process was seen as a mechanical sender and receiver process (Lasswell, 1946, as cited in Servaes, 1996), but now communication is a two-way interaction and participation process at all levels (Servaes, 2002). As Melkote and Steeves (2001, as cited in Noorzai, 2006) describe, the key objective of participatory communication is to involve all stakeholders in the process to decide about their future. Therefore, participation needs the two-way horizontal model of communication rather than the one-way vertical approach where a sender transfers information to a receiver (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, as cited in Noorzai, 2006).

The new participatory paradigm of communication emphasizes more on situation analysis rather than information dissemination and participation than persuasion (Melfalopulos & World Bank, 2008). As Waisbord (2001) demonstrates, in the past development was explained to underdeveloped countries as a form of replication; while, the present objective of development communication is to detach limitations and form a more equal and participatory society

(Waisbrod, 2001). Development communication promotes the importance of involving people in development process rather than just informing them about changes (Waisbrod, 2001).

Against such a backdrop, development communication theory provides the framework to guide the study in examining the NSP's participatory communication approach in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion among people and communities in Afghanistan. As the study focuses on the concepts of solidarity and social cohesion, it is important to explore the features that can help in examining these concepts.

### **Solidarity and Social Cohesion**

In order to examine solidarity and social cohesion this thesis explores the features that describe solidarity and social cohesion. A review of literature related to both concepts follows.

**Solidarity.** The Oxford (online) dictionary defines solidarity as, “unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group” (2010). Bayertz (1999) states, “the term solidarity has its roots in the Roman Law of Obligation” (p.3). The law of obligation was the common responsibilities of an individual towards his family and community in order to pay liabilities (Bayertz, 1999). The principle of mutual assurance between individual and society, since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, has been generalized beyond the law of obligation context and has been applied to the fields of morality, society, and politics (Bayertz, 1999).

The existing literature considers the French revolution the starting of the concept of solidarity (Wolfrum & Kojima, 2010). However, the concept of solidarity at that time dealt with economic inequalities (Wolfrum & Kojima, 2010).

Solidarity, in its most general use, means connecting people as one community (Bayertz, 1999). Solidarity, according to Guglielmo (2005), is a form of unity among people for

accomplishing an objective or a goal. Authors who are influenced by Durkheim's writings assume that the concept of solidarity is moral (Wildt, 1999).

Solidarity, according to Bayertz (1998, as cited in O'Sullivan-Lango, 2011), is a mutual attachment between persons or groups; this mutual attachment includes two levels, first, a level of an actual common ground, and second, a normative level of a common commitment of aid for that common ground. Bayertz (1999) defines solidarity as an inner force holding a society together. According to Aristotle (cited in Bayertz, 1999), confined community, bonds between people, and economic exchange are essential but not sufficient foundation for the state. Bayertz (1999) argues that Aristotle's main goal was a community of noble life and families for the purpose of an independent and perfect life. Bayertz (1999) further describes that in Aristotle's view the nature of human beings lays in the desire to live together. Human beings are not made for an isolated way of life; they are to live together in a community with others (Bayertz, 1999).

The phenomenon of solidarity points towards participation and the principle of participation require recognition of all the affected parties (Schein, 1960). According to Potter (2009), solidarity requires participation. Social progress and better living requires solidarity. Solidarity of those in making the world a safer place for life and social progress calls for greater solidarity of those who are able to implement satisfactory strategies and hold sufficient assets to evaluate them (Pantev, 2004). According to Stiefel (1999), the lack of a neutral place to talk and meet is often the reason for the problems of the relationship between people and institutions. Therefore, development of solidarity is possible at its greatest when there is interaction and engagement between self and others (O'Sullivan-Lango, 2011). Further, for people in a community to achieve any kind of task it is necessary to have a level of honour for each other and have involvement in that certain situation (Schein, 1960). Thus, for enabling changes in a community, people must make connections to each other (Fenton, 2008).

The NSP has developed the culture of mutuality; as in few cases described by Nixon (2008), different communities come together and share their grants for a joint project that will benefit them all together. Nixon (2008) illustrates a case in Badakhshan province where some communities came together and donated a shared land between them for a school. There have been many such cases described by Nixon (2008). However, there are reports of conflicts too on joint projects (Nixon, 2008).

Solidarity requires coordination, division of labour and commonality of values, similarity, continuous dialogue, and communication (Pantev, 2004). Benjamin Barber (1984, as cited in Shlomi, 2005) describes that participation creates a sense of understanding and concern among citizens. According to Shlomi (2005), some theories state that through participation people learn to see themselves as members of a community rather than thinking of themselves as independent individuals.

Islam also encourages and directs its followers to maintain solidarity, unity, and cooperation (Rasoulallah.net, n.d.). This *hadith* of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), narrated by Abu Musa al Ash'ari, shows the importance of solidarity in Islam that says, "a believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other" (Rasoulallah.net, n.d.). Torabi (2007) describes that the NSP values Islamic norms of unity, equality, and justice in its design.

Denninger (1999) describes solidarity as a shared knowledge of identity and belonging to a community among members of a community; with this sense of belonging, members consider a loss of their community as a loss of themselves.

To establish a framework, two sub-concepts from the literature reviewed have been derived to measure solidarity among people in the Khost province of Afghanistan. These two sub-concepts are:

- 1- Collective action; and
- 2- Cooperation.

**Collective action.** Desai (2012) defines collective action as, “coordinated actions by a group of individuals who seek to achieve a common goal” (p. 1). Marshall (1988, as cited in Meinzen-Dick, Gregorio, & McCarthy, 2004) defines collective action as, “action taken by a group (either directly or on its behalf through an organization) in pursuit of members’ perceived shared interests” (p. 4). Matta and Alvalapati (2006) define collective action as a voluntary engagement of people or a group to achieve a common good through a common action. Further, Meinzen-Dick, Gregorio, and McCarthy (2004) provide some other definitions such as, “joint action for the same goal” and “action to achieve a common objective, when the outcomes depend on interdependence of members” (p. 4). Meinzen-Dick, Gregorio, and McCarthy (2004) argue that this common or collective action should be voluntary in order to differentiate it from paid labour. Meinzen-Dick, Gregorio, and McCarthy (2004) provide some examples of collective action such as, “collective decision-making, setting rules of conduct of a group and designing management rules, implementing decisions, and monitoring adherence to rules” (p. 5). According to Meinzen-Dick, Gregorio, and McCarthy (2004) participants of a collective action can contribute in several ways, in-kind or labour, to accomplish a shared goal.

According to Desai (2012), collective action has a significant role in development of societies. Desai (2012) argues that collective actions can emerge when individuals have: low cost of information, opportunity to organize actions, opportunity to engage in interactions, and authority to reward contributors and punish free-riders. Dasgupta and Beard (2006) argue that social capital facilitates collective action. Dao (2007) states that

the objective of collective action is to attain the shared interests of a majority of members of a group and provide public goods through the collaboration of different individuals. According to Irlend and Thomalla (2011), collective action provides opportunity to community members to voice their opinions and discuss and solve problems and conflicts. According to a study conducted by Irlend and Thomalla (2011) in Nepal on women's self-helping groups, it was found that collective action strengthens social networks.

***Cooperation.*** Cooperation has always been an essential component for human society that plays a significant role in rural development (Meinzen-Dick, Gregorio, & McCarthy, 2004). According to USATAA (2013), cooperation is an attitude that demonstrates equal rights and power among individuals. In a cooperative action, according to USATAA (2013), people work together and respect each other's inputs. Repeated interactions and communication among individuals can increase cooperation (Bandiera, Barankay, & Rasul, 2005).

According to Baland et al. (2001) and Banerjee et al. (2001, as cited in Bandiera, Barankay, & Rasul, 2005), inequality and community size can be a cause of reduction in cooperation among people. A detailed set of rules can sustain cooperative action among people that manages distribution of cost and benefits approved by all participants, equal distribution of benefits, execution of a clear monitoring, development of sound sanctions for deviators, and formation of a committee to resolve conflicts and adopt required changes (Bandiera, Barankay, & Rasul, 2005).

**Table 2****Cooperative behaviour**

| <b>Cooperative Behaviors</b>                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Negotiating to resolve conflicts so that everyone wins                                                          |
| Forgiveness                                                                                                     |
| Inclusion                                                                                                       |
| Respect, understanding or appreciation of uniqueness and differences                                            |
| Being OK, making others OK, doing your best, excellence                                                         |
| Sharing                                                                                                         |
| Responsive communication, intimacy                                                                              |
| Integration                                                                                                     |
| Honesty                                                                                                         |
| Oneness, consensus                                                                                              |
| Healing, transcending, exploring options                                                                        |
| Appreciating, understanding respecting differences                                                              |
| Communication, conflict resolution, problem identification and resolution, positive regard for self and others. |
| Responsibility, confrontation                                                                                   |
| Interdependence, autonomy, synergy                                                                              |
| Cooperation, power with love                                                                                    |

*Source: USATAA (2013).*

In order to help analyze the data and measure the concept of solidarity, the following indicators have been developed based on the review of literature:

1. People are willing to work together for a common goal;
2. People are willing to volunteer for a mutual goal;
3. Community members are willing to contribute both in labour and in kind to achieve a collective objective;
4. People are willing to resolve conflicts between them and give importance to their mutual interests;
5. There is a collective decision-making among people;
6. Community members participate actively in development of their community;

7. People trust and respect their representatives; and
8. There is transparency in information sharing among community members and their representatives and everyone has equal right to raise their voice.

**Social Cohesion.** According to Colletta et al. (2001), “social cohesion can be described as glue that bonds society together, promoting harmony, a sense of community, and a degree of commitment to promoting the common good” (p. 2). Koonce (2011) further describes, “social cohesion is a measure of a degree of trust members of a society have in each other and in society itself” (p.145). In addition, Maxwell (1996, as cited in Spoonley, Peace, & O’Neil, 2005) labels social cohesion as:

Social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community (p. 92).

Further, the Canadian government’s policy research sub-committee (PR Sub-c) (1997, as cited in Awde, 2008) defines social cohesion as, “an on-going process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity in Canada based upon hope, trust and reciprocity among Canadians” (p. 14).

From the stated definitions of social cohesion by different scholars we can assume that social cohesion is a sense of intimacy, belonging, and unity. However, these elements have been used differently to define the term.

Colletta et al. (2001) claim that weak social cohesion in a society increases the hazard of “social disorganization, fragmentation, and exclusion” (p. 4). A cohesive society, according to Colletta et al. (2001), is not only a conflict free society but also a transparent state that functions

effectively with respect to human rights, justice, and equal distribution of resources. Siddique (2001) argues that any state cannot enduringly preserve social cohesion. According to Siddique (2001), it is difficult to measure social cohesion quantitatively but it can be measured through its practice among stakeholders. Siddique (2001) considers social cohesion strong among stakeholders when the majority of them consider themselves members in a particular society rather than individual power holders. In order to build social cohesion within a society, it is important to raise the feeling of being participants and stakeholders of development among members (Siddique, 2001). Siddique (2001) argues that social cohesion is built when the majority of members of a society consider themselves the stakeholders in their society.

Siddique (2001) argues that social cohesion establishes social stability required for a society to develop and be stable. Social cohesion can be seen as a basic requirement for any society (Siddique, 2011). Similarly, Colleta et al. (2001) also believe that post conflict societies; in order to bring sustainable peace, require building social cohesion within the society. Koonce (2011) explains, “most experts discuss [social cohesion] as a measure that applies to larger groups” (p.144); while, Friedkin (2004) states that social cohesion is flexible that applies to groups of any size.

Jenson (2007, as cited in Jenson, 2010) describes, “in the mid-1990s in Europe and the broader world of the Organization for Economic Co-operation for Development (OECD), the concept of social cohesion made a dramatic comeback in the policy world after neoliberalism” (p.4). OECD is the first organization that invigorated the concept of social cohesion (Jenson, 2010). In the conference of *Beyond 2000: The new social policy agenda* held by OECD in 1996, the focus was on areas that increase returns through, “social cohesion and active participation in society” (Jenson, 2010, p. 83).

In order to better understand the concept of social cohesion it is worth quoting the Council of Europe:

Social cohesion, as defined by the Directorate General of social cohesion of the Council of Europe, is a concept that includes values and principles, which aim to ensure that all citizens, without discrimination and on an equal footing, have access to fundamental social and economic rights. Social cohesion is a flagship concept, which constantly reminds us of the need to be collectively attentive to and aware of, any kind of discrimination, inequality, marginality or exclusion. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5)

Koonce (2011) believes that in order to analyze society efficiently, it is important to have a narrow definition for social cohesion. Kearns and Forrest (2000) explain that “a cohesive society hangs together; all the components parts somehow fit in and contribute to society’s collective project and well-being; and conflict between societal goals and groups, and disruptive behaviours, are largely absent or minimal” (p. 996).

For the purpose of this thesis, social cohesion is discussed along Kearns and Forrest’s (2000) five constituent elements of social cohesion. These five elements are as follows:

- 1- Common values and a civic culture;
- 2- Social order and social culture;
- 3- Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities;
- 4- Social networks and social capital; and
- 5- Place attachment and identity (Kearns & Forrest, 2000).

Kearns and Forrest (2000) used these elements to analyse social cohesion in urban communities. Each element is described individually below.

***Common values and a civic culture.*** Kearns and Forrest (2000) describe a society to be cohesive where members share “common values” and “a common set of moral principles and codes of behaviour” (p. 997). Through common values, they classify and support mutual aims

and objectives, and with codes of behaviour, they develop their relations with each other (Kearns & Forrest, 2000). According to Awde (2008), moral principles and codes of behaviour in a society demonstrate relations of members of a society and contribute in building support among them. He further states, “common social norms and values may standardize behaviour, preventing or cushioning any uncertainty or conflict that arises between citizens” (Awde, 2008, p. 16).

According to Almond and Verba (1963, as cited in Kearns & Forrest, 2000), people’s reaction towards political institutions and their role in them demonstrate political culture. Illustrating Almond and Verba’s perspective, Kearns and Forrest (2000) describe a cohesive society where members of a society aim to take part in local and national politics, respect and trust governmental institutions, and mutually decide rights and responsibilities. Awde (2008) argues that shared morals, ethics, and ideas bind a society together, and when these elements develop in a community, they achieve a common way of thinking. Thus, members of the community participate actively in achieving collective goals (Awde, 2008).

***Social order and social control.*** Kearns and Forrest (2000) believe that the absence of any conflict and problem in a society is a sign of social cohesion. According to them, “routines, demands, and reciprocities involved in everyday life” develops social cohesion (Kearns & Forrest, 2000, p. 998). Wrong (1994, as cited in Awde, 2008) believes that routines, demands, and reciprocities generate an atmosphere where people assist each other without any conflict in achieving a mutual objective. Sugden (1984, as cited in Awde, 2008), in his concept of reciprocity, describes that voluntary activities are central in developing social order and control. Kearns and Forrest (2000) believe that people should feel that they are stakeholders of a social system and that they are part of a social project that will benefit them all. Kearns and Forrest (2000) state that “social order rests upon tolerance between individuals and groups” (p. 998).

Kearns and Forrest (2000) explain these groups as different ethnic groups and different generations.

***Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities.*** Kearns and Forrest (2000) relates social cohesion to the principle of social solidarity. In this context, social cohesion in a society signifies a synchronized development towards “common economic, social and environmental standard” (p. 999). Wilkinson (1996, as cited in Kearns & Forrest, 2000) claims that social solidarity is essential for personal and collective well-being.

The European Commission (1996 as cited in Kearns & Forrest, 2000), achieved its European model of society, that has a sense of belonging to the European Union, through democratic participation and decrease in social and economic inequalities among regions and omitted groups. Social cohesion in the context of the European Union refers to aspects such as, “exten[sion of] opportunities for income-generating activities, reduction in poverty, reduc[ion in] disparities in incomes, employment and competitiveness, higher quality of life, and open access to services of general benefits and protection” (p. 999). According to Awde (2008), such opportunities help in income equality and prevent the stress and disruption that can result in collapse of social cohesion. Awde (2008) further believes that allowing equal access of people to social and economic services can support in developing a socially cohesive society.

***Social networks and social capital.*** While explaining social cohesion, the notion of social capital cannot be forgotten. OECD (2011, as cited in Spoonley, Peace, & O’Neil, 2005) defines social capital as, “networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings which facilitate cooperation amongst group” (p. 93). Woolcock and Narayan (2000, as cited in Vervisch, 2011) define social capital as, “the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (p.24). Koonce (2011) believes that social cohesion and social capital are two different concepts, while, Heyneman, (2005) claims that social capital has deep effect on social

cohesion (Koonce, 2011). Kearns and Forrests (2000) also describe that social capital is not a synonym for social cohesion but plays an important role in building social cohesion.

Kearns and Forrest (2000) believe that social interactions in a society nurture social cohesion. Granovetter (1973, as cited in Kearns & Forrest, 2000) argues that strong social networks can enable the best resources of social support. Social networks and social support are cores of social cohesion (Kearns & Forrest, 2000). Kearns and Forrest (2000) explains, Pahl and Spencer's (1977) argument on social cohesion as, "a friendly society, based on trust and reciprocity, may be more in tune with social change..... and with the spirit of the time" (p. 1000). Kearns and Forrest (2000) further explain that a cohesive society can easily resolve the problems by collective action.

Awde (2008) believes that interactions and communication that takes place between people develops social capital in a society. Putnam (2004, as cited in Vervisch, 2011) demonstrates two dimensions of social capital: "responsive and unresponsive" (p. 26). According to Putnam (2004, as cited in Vervisch, 2011), responsive social capital moves towards trust and ties between community members and their representatives, while unresponsive social capital moves towards nepotism, corruption, and oppression. Social capital includes the elements of social organization, principles of trust, standards of reciprocity, and networks of civic participation (Putnam, 1993, as cited in Awde, 2008). According to Putnam (2000, as cited in Awde, 2008), "trust and reciprocity is strengthened by civic engagement" (p. 19). Awde (2008) believes that social relationships and organizations, established through trust and reciprocity between people, facilitate collective action that enables a society to overcome problems.

***Place attachment and identity.*** This element of social cohesion discusses the connections between people and places (Awde, 2008). According to Awde (2008), "[place attachment and

identity] element recognizes that the relationship between people and places can play an important role in formation of social cohesion” (p. 20). A place, according to Entrikin (1989, as cited in Awde, 2008), can be a building, a neighbourhood, a district, a village, or a city. Awde (2008) further describes that values and meanings connected to a specific place can produce a strong attachment to it, which, in turn, contributes to social cohesion (Massey, 1991). According to Kearns and Forrest (2000, as cited in Awde, 2008), “having a strong sense of attachment towards a particular place can provide: a sense of security, a link to people who are important to us, a symbolic bond of people, past experience, ideas, and culture” (p. 21). Having the feeling to belong to a place often results in actions that are, “territorial in nature” (Awde, 2008, p. 21). Therefore, getting involved in such actions increases people’s support for a common goal (Kearns & Forrest, 2000). Solidarity and social cohesion are two different concepts but they both discuss collective action, belonging, common good, and mutual agreement for achieving a shared goal. The features derived from the literature review help to measure the concepts of solidarity and social cohesion.

Based on the above literature review, the following research questions are posed:

**RQ1.** How can participatory communication strengthen solidarity and social cohesion? What role can participatory communication play in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan?

**RQ2.** Have Community Development Councils been engaged in strengthening social cohesion and solidarity among people in the Khost province of Afghanistan? If so, how?

**RQ3.** Has the National Solidarity Program been engaged in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion through participatory communication in Afghanistan? If so, how?

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Everet and Louis (1981, as cited in Ospina, 2004) differentiated two research approaches “inquiry from the outside” as quantitative studies and “inquiry from the inside” as qualitative studies (the nature of qualitative research, Para. 1). In the inside inquiry or qualitative method, the researcher proposes a universal picture from a unique situation where characteristics are important for meaning (Ospina, 2004). Communication researchers believe, according to Keyton (2006), measuring human behaviour is more complex; therefore, qualitative research methods are more effective, well known, and accepted in studying communication phenomena.

Qualitative methods use inductive approach to investigate phenomenon, which means they start from the specific and move to a general idea (Keyton, 2006). Therefore, the researcher uses an inductive mode for this study and allows the data to speak (Ospina, 2004). Shank (2002, as cited in Ospina 2004) describes qualitative research as, “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (p. 1). Hancock (1998) states, “qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena” (p. 6). Qualitative research, according to Keyton (2006), can present a deep understanding of human communication. Qualitative researchers, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), “seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformation” (p. 18). Qualitative research seeks to increase the understanding about people’s behaviours and answer why certain things are the way they are in our society (Hancock, 1998). Communication researchers use qualitative approach to study the function, process, and practice of communication (Ketyon, 2006). According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a method of understanding peoples’ perspectives on a social or human problem.

The present study seeks to explore the social phenomena of solidarity, social cohesion, and participatory communication. As described previously, few studies have been conducted on the quality of the National Solidarity Program, especially on solidarity and social cohesion; therefore, the study has used a qualitative research design to examine the program qualitatively. Qualitative research, as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, as cited in Ospina, 2004), studies the phenomena in their natural settings to understand them from people's perspective as they practice them. Therefore, the researcher considered qualitative design relevant for the study to better understand the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion. This study, more specifically, uses a qualitative case study approach.

Neale et al. (2006) describe a case study as a unique, special, or interesting story about an individual, organization, program, process, or event. In addition, Harling (n.d.) describes, a case study as a holistic research approach that investigates a contemporary issue within its natural setting. Neale et al. (2006) believe that a case study explains a story behind the result, which can be an opportunity to highlight a project's success or demonstrate a particular issue or challenge. According to Hancock (1998), the case study research design provides rich and in-depth information and seeks to answer 'how' and 'why' questions (Yin, 2003, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case study is a flexible research method that employs all methods of data collection (Hancock, 1998; Neale et al, 2006).

Hence, a qualitative case study approach allows studying a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources and ensures the investigation through variety of lenses, and reveals different facets of any phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A qualitative case study allows a researcher to explore, "individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs" (Yin, 2003, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544).

As mentioned above, a case study approach seeks to describe an issue in depth and offers detailed information; therefore, the study uses a case study approach in order to examine the phenomena of solidarity, social cohesion, and participatory communication in detail, and provide a comprehensive and in-depth explanation of the issue.

### **Research Questions**

As mentioned in chapter two, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1.** How can participatory communication strengthen solidarity and social cohesion? What role can participatory communication play in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan?

**RQ2.** Have the Community Development Councils been engaged in strengthening social cohesion and solidarity among people in the Khost province of Afghanistan? If so, how?

**RQ3.** Has the National Solidarity Program been engaged in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion through participatory communication in Afghanistan? If so, how?

### **Participants**

The study selected participants based on their work relation with the NSP. There are four parties involved with the program; NSP as the charge of the program, World Bank as donor agency, facilitating partners as implementing agencies, CDCs members as practicing parties, and community members who are affected by the program.

The study initially proposed to recruit 12 participants that would include one employee from the NSP working in the program section, two CDC members, one employee from the NSP World Bank team, six community members, and two NSP implementing partners, one employee from each. Some employees from the World Bank and the NSP initially accepted to participate

in the interview, however, due to their busy schedule, eventually they were not able to participate. The researcher was able to interview a CARE International employee as a facilitating partner to the NSP but could not interview IRC employees as the second facilitating partner due to their busy schedule. The researcher also contacted other facilitating partners but they did not reply. Finally, the researcher was able to recruit 10 participants; three CDC members, six community members, and one implementing partners of the NSP that was CARE International.

### **Recruitment Process**

Participants were invited to take part in the study through a solicitation letter that demonstrated the purpose of the study. This solicitation letter was sent to the participants, who had access to Internet, through e-mail. Those who did not have access to Internet were contacted and invited by phone to participate in the study. The contact information of community members and CDC members was obtained through researcher's network and colleagues living in the Khost province and the CARE International Afghanistan contact information was available on their official website.

### **Sampling**

It is not necessary, even if it is possible, to collect data from the whole population in order to get valid findings (Mack et al., 2005). Similarly, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) state, “no qualitative project can capture every aspect of a scene as it unfolds” (p. 120). Therefore, a qualitative research study selects a sample from a large population (Mack et al., 2005). Additionally, Lindlof and Tylor (2002) believe that a logically selected sampling strategy could reduce efforts of a researcher and help in making systematic contact with a phenomenon.

Qualitative studies, mostly, use nonprobability sampling (Neuman, 2011). Most qualitative studies use purposive sampling technique, also known as judgemental sampling

(Lindolf & Taylor, 2002). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002). Purposive sampling is valuable for certain situations (Neuman, 2011).

Schwandt (1997, as cited in Lindolf & Taylor, 2002) describes the reason for using a purposive sampling as, “sites and cases are chosen because there may be a good reason to believe that what goes on there is critical to understanding some process or concept, or to testing or elaborating some established theory” (p. 122).

According to Neuman (2011), “purposive sampling is appropriate to selecting unique cases that are especially informative” (p. 331). Babbie (1990, as cited in Bobbie, 2007) explains purposive sampling as a sample selection technique where a researcher selects a sample based on his/her own knowledge of the population and the goal of the study. The population is selected on non-random bases and particular characteristics. This method is ideal for studying a “small subset of a large population” (Babbie, 1990, as cited in Bobbie, 2007, Purposive, Para. 2).

The present study used purposive sampling to select potential participants. Purposive sampling was an appropriate sampling technique for the study. As mentioned previously, purposive sampling allows the researcher to use his/her own expertise and knowledge in selecting the sample based on specific characteristics. The different categories of participants for recruitment were pre-selected (e.g., community members, CDC members, facilitating partner). This study chose participants working directly with the NSP such as CDC members and NGOs, working as implementing partner to the NSP. Since the NSP works directly with the rural population, the study chose community members from rural areas in the Khost province of Afghanistan where the NSP is currently working. The study also used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique (Katz, 2006). Snowball sampling, according to Biernacki and Waldorf (1982, as cited in Taylor and Lindlof, 2001), “yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some

characteristics that are of research interest” (p. 124). Snowball sampling recruits future study participants using existing participants’ network (Katz, 2006). Since the researcher belongs to the Khost province, initially participants were recruited using personal network. Later, primary participants referred the researcher to potential participants.

### **Data Collection**

The data was collected through interviewing the study participants. According to Mach et al. (2005), “an interview is one of the most common qualitative methods” (p. 29). As Keyton (2006) states, “interviews are a practical qualitative method for discovering how people think and feel about their communication practices” (p. 269). An interview is a sufficient tool for collecting information about issues and processes that are not observable through other methods (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Interviews are mostly compatible for understanding the social actors’ experiences and perceptions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

An in-depth interview is a technique in qualitative research that enables a researcher to produce an intense picture of participants’ perspectives on a given research topic (Mack et al., 2005). According to Keyton (2011), interviews are a useful qualitative method for understanding how people believe and feel about certain issues or topics.

Mostly, in-depth interviews are conducted face-to-face, but modern technology such as telephone and the Internet also qualify as in-depth interview tools (Mack et al., 2005). The Internet offers a range of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) tools (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). CMC is now an interview setting (Davis et al., 2004 & Stone, 1995, as cited in Kazmer & Xie, 2008). One of the benefits of e-mail interviews is their cost effectiveness (Keyton, 2006). Email interview also enables researchers and participants to come together even if they are miles away (Keyton, 2006; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Email interviews are already in a text form that saves time and efforts of the researcher (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). However, according to Curasi (2001, as cited in Kazmer & Xie, 2008), email interviews may lack facial expressions and body language available in face-to-face interviews but can provide cues not available in face-to-face interviews such as spelling. Similarly, Lindlof and Taylor (2011) state that participants can add certain kinds of symbols, emotions, text formats, or punctuations to express their attitudes and moods. Therefore, the researcher, before sending the questions, exchanged few emails with the study participants to make them comfortable and gain their trust. Further, the researcher ensured the participants that the data received from them would not be forwarded to anyone else (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). As such, the study interviewed participants through email. Those participants, such as community members, who do not have access to Internet, were interviewed through telephone.

The research obtained Research Ethic Board (REB) approval prior to starting the data collection process. There are certain ethical issues with email interviews that the study considered. A high-level management team, in many organizations, monitors employees' emails, which is a legal act (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Therefore, the researcher allowed the participants for this study to decide whether they want to use their personal emails or official emails for the purpose of interview.

Although, most of the study participants were interviewed through email, those participants, such as community members, who did not have access to the Internet, were interviewed through telephone. Quantitative studies use telephone interviews widely (Barriball, Christian, While & Bergen, 1996; Carr & Worth, 2001, as cited in Novick, 2008); few qualitative studies apply telephone interviews in very specific situations, for example, when a research involves some sensitive topic and participants prefer to be interviewed by phone in order to preserve the anonymity, when it is hard to reach certain participants, or when a researcher is

conducting research in an unsafe area (Struges & Hanrahan, 2004). Telephone interview is a useful tool for collecting data as it allows a researcher to reach participants who are far, geographically; it also allows supervising interviews and enhances interviewer's safety (Novick, 2008). Musselwhite, Cuff, McGregor, and King (2006, as cited in Knox & Burkard, 2009) describe telephone interviews' advantages as follows:

- 1- Telephone interviews reduce the need for traveling for data collection purpose;
- 2- Researchers note taking does not make participants uncomfortable as it may in face-to-face interviews; and
- 3- The anonymity allowed by telephone interviews may let participants to answer freely.

The interview questions were translated into Pashto, the language spoken among people in the Khost province, for the interviews conducted via phone with community members. Those interviewed by email were able to communicate in English, therefore they did not require a translated version of the questions.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher belongs to the Khost province of Afghanistan where the bulk of the data collection for this study was conducted. The researcher's belonging to the province where the study was conducted is considered an important driver for the data collection process, which helped in obtaining information that would, otherwise, be impossible for an outsider to access. The community members trusted the researcher as being one of them and shared their views comfortably. However, the researcher has not worked with the NSP and, therefore, has no personal biases towards the program. Being an outsider helped the researcher to provide an

objective and impartial perspective of the NSP's literature and eliminate the influence of any subjectivity.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of summarizing the mass data collected and presenting the important features of the results (Hancock, 1998). In qualitative research approach data analysis is the process of classifying categories and themes (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, as cited in Keyton, 2006). Lindlof and Taylor (2011) describe analysis as, "the process of labeling and breaking down (or decontextualizing) raw data and then reconstructing them into categories, patterns, themes, concepts, and propositions" (p. 243). The present study analyzed the collected data by dividing them into categories and themes, the process suggested by Lindlof and Taylor (2002).

Longfield (2004) argues that the analysis of interview data occurs throughout the study. Qualitative data analysis, systematically, starts with the creation of categories and coding pattern (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). During theory development qualitative researchers take an inductive approach, which is also shown in their data analysis procedure (Jackson et al., 2011). This study also used the inductive approach. Keyton (2006) states, the data analysis process, in qualitative research, begins with data collection process.

Accordingly, the data analysis process continued throughout the data collection process. The data collected through emails were already in text format that eased the process of transcription but that data collected through telephone interviews required transcription; therefore, the researcher performed verbatim transcription of all the phone interviews. The researcher examined each interview individually and in detail to get a general sense of the collected information (Creswell, 2009). The collected data was coded manually.

Coding and categorizing are important steps of data analysis (Basit, 2003). As Keyton (2006) describes the qualitative analysis process requires data coding and categorizing. A coding process involves dividing the collected data in the created categories (Dey, 1993, as cited in Basit, 2003), and categories are labels to give meaning to the inferential information collected during a study (Basit, 2003). The coding and categorizing process help in managing the collected data and make the interpretation process easy (Keyton, 2006). Accordingly, the researcher read through the data and coded the data to form categories and themes.

Thematic coding was a suitable coding mechanism for the study and analysing interview data. According to Flick (1998, as cited in Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010), thematic coding is developed for “studies in which groups that are studied are derived from the research questions and thus a priori” (pp. 230-231). The researcher went through all the collected data (interview transcripts) to get familiarize with the information and highlight the relevant text. During the reading process and highlighting relevant text, a brief description on each code was annotated in the margin to help in developing new ideas. The relevant text from the data was then separated to manage the data in readable form (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Then the relevant ideas were separated and categorized. The coded items were then organized by placing them under categories that expressed same idea. After categorizing all the relevant ideas and naming them (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), six themes and five subthemes were retrieved from the data. Themes generated from the data related to the theory. Some themes were predetermined and some emerged from the data during the analysis process (see Appendix D).

### **Data Validity and Reliability**

Qualitative validity refers to the accuracy of data while qualitative reliability refers to consistency (Gibbs, 2007, as cited in Creswell, 2009). Johnson (2008) states, “before reporting

the data, validation of data is necessary” (p. 4). Kohn (1997) also argues that qualitative analysis must consider threats to reliability and validity. Lincoln and Guba substituted reliability and validity with parallel concept of trustworthiness (Morse et al., 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) use different terms to explain reliability and validity in qualitative or naturalistic inquiries. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the terms reliability and validity are utilized to describe quality of a quantitative study and to discuss the quality of a qualitative study the terms credibility, conformability, consistency, and applicability are used. Morse et al. (2002) describe that credibility, conformability, consistency, and applicability are the four aspects of trustworthiness.

In a case study, according to Kohn (1997), overload of data can affect reliability and validity of a study. Therefore, in order to reduce this problem, the current study ensures consistency in data collection and quality control (Kohn, 1997). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest, audit trail, member-confirming during coding process, confirming results with participants, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, structural validation, and referential material competency to ensure trustworthiness in a study.

The study email interviews are conducted and participants replied to the questions sent to them via email. The participants themselves typed all the information in the reply to the interview questions. In doing so, the participants performed the verification process. The researcher established a rapport with the participants of the study prior to collecting the data to ensure trustworthiness, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba, (1985). The establishment of rapport not only helped in understanding the participants and the organizations but also in developing trust between the researcher and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Lawlor (1994), “the quality and reliability of data collected through telephone interview methods is influenced substantially by the quality of the performance of the

interviewers” (p. 41). In order to attain the level of the regularity required for standardization, the researcher followed a scripted introduction (Lawlor, 1994). The questions were asked as worded in the script, and the order of questioning was maintained to manage reluctant responses in the way planned (Lawlor, 1994). The researcher also used follow up question in a way to repeat participants’ exact words so that they can elaborate on their previous comments. The process of establishing rapport and trust between researcher and participants also took place in email interviews.

### **Chapter Four: Findings**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The researcher conducted 10 interviews (e-mail and telephone interviews) and collected voluminous amount of data. This voluminous data was cleaned by reading constantly and separating the raw data from the relevant data. It was managed in a readable format. The data was coded manually and 6 themes and 5 subthemes were generated that relate to development communication theory and the concepts of solidarity and social cohesion that guide the study.

In the following, participants’ perceptions are presented in both paraphrased and direct quotes to support the themes and subthemes. Following the findings and analysis, the next chapter will present a discussion of the findings to answer the research questions.

#### **Opportunity to Voiceless Population**

As described in chapter two, collective action, an indicator of solidarity, provides opportunity to the people to voice their opinions and share their views (Irlend & Thomalla, 2011). One of the indicators of solidarity, as described in chapter two, is that people have equal

right to raise their voices. As such, the theme, opportunity to voiceless population, emerged based on the mentioned indicators.

Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) describe, “within the framework of development, participation means the strengthening of the power of the deprived majority” (p. 226). Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) cite Serageldin (1994) explaining that participatory communication empowers people and provides them the opportunity to express their needs and decide for themselves, and gives voice to less powerful people. Development communication’s participatory approach focuses on all stakeholders’ participation at all levels of a project. It places the emphasis on inclusion of all stakeholders in decision-making, implementation, and designing of a project. McPhail (2009) describes, participatory communication emphasizes that all people should express themselves and be heard.

The interviews revealed some interesting elements about providing opportunity to vulnerable populations and allowing them to express themselves. According to the community members who were interviewed, the NSP has allowed them to decide for themselves. One of the community members said, “we did not believe that such a program could be implemented where we will have the opportunity to decide for ourselves.” Most of the participants described that this project has given the opportunity to poor and vulnerable communities to be part of their community development. The CARE International representative, a facilitating partner to the NSP, demonstrated during the interview:

Before the establishment of the NSP, many humanitarian projects were implemented but they were not equally distributed. They were implemented for a specific population such as only women, youth, and etc., but the NSP is implemented in all over the country for all the citizens.

Community members described that if the aim is to have a better life and improved living conditions, the development and improvement process should start from the rural areas and vulnerable populations should be given the opportunity to participate, which the government of Afghanistan and international community have started through the NSP. Community members also described that people in urban areas have access to the basic facilities and services; they have always had the opportunity to decide for themselves and fight for their rights. Therefore, they have confidence that the government will hear them. Rural population never had such an opportunity prior to the establishment of the NSP. According to the CARE International representative, the NSP has increased the confidence among rural and poor people. He stated, “now rural population know that they will be heard and their needs will be fulfilled.” He further described that there are clusters in each community that ensure marginalized community members’ participation in every step of community development through the NSP.

The findings show that community-driven-development programs, like the NSP, allow vulnerable populations to participate in development of their community and country. According to the CARE International representative, community members participate in monthly meetings, held by their CDCs, where they share their views and decide together, which helps to increase their self-confidence and encourages them to be part of their own development. The above argument shows that allowing the vulnerable population to decide for their development is indicative of empowering them.

Community members are also empowered with skills required for development planning. A CDC member described, “we are required to participate in different trainings and workshops after being elected as CDC members by people. These trainings help us in better planning and implementing of projects.”

The study showed that empowering individuals increases their control over their lives and participation in their community. A community member stated, “now through the NSP the rural and poor people are able to raise their voice, talk about their needs, and decide for themselves.” Majority of the participants seemed to believe that participation in decision-making increases self-confidence among people. Community members, during interviews, expressed that they supported the NSP because it allowed them to be a part of the decisions affecting their life. They also stated that when they decide together on a project in their community they work together to achieve it and find solutions for problems collectively. Thus, the findings indicate that participation plays an important role in empowering vulnerable populations and allows them to identify strategies for accomplishing goals in a collective manner.

It is also found that fundamental improvements are possible when rural and poor people are given the right and opportunity to decide for their needs because they know about their needs and necessities more than an outsider does. For example, a community member during the interview stated, “the NSP is the only program so far in our community that allows us to identify our needs. Before some organizations would come and implement a project without consulting us, and, therefore, most of the projects were not aligned with our needs.” Similarly, another community member described during the interview:

The speciality and exclusiveness of this program [NSP] is in its nature of implementation where communities are given the right to identify few basic projects that really respond to their most crucial necessities and which would be the most important for them. In our village we implemented a project for clean drinking water. We decided together and implemented it together with all the community members’ consent.

Another community member stated, “in majority of the communities there have been really minor differences, which have been removed by community members after having

comprehensive discussions on the differences and issues.” Discussion with participants revealed that the NSP allows members of the community, through intensive consultation, engagement, and communication processes, to identify their own problems and to prioritize and decide for their development.

The findings also highlighted that the NSP program, through its participatory approach, has developed a sense of equality among people. As the CARE International representative described during the interview, “with the NSP all community members feel the equality in participation, decision-making process, and grants distribution.” Community members feel they are treated equally in all aspects of the program whether it is endowment distributions in communities, participation, or decision-making. Community members were also found to believe that the program has been able to give opportunity to the voiceless population by allowing them to participate. For example, a community member stated, “the NSP is the only program in our village where everyone has equal right to participate and share their views.” Another CDC member said, “people now feel that they have equal share in every decision in the community, therefore, they participate with interest in every process of the NSP and community development.”

### **Ownership**

One of the components of development communication theory is to allow people be the owners of their development. Development communication allows individuals to take decisions that affect their lives. The theme of ownership emerged from the data. Almost all of the study participants discussed the issue of ownership. Referring back to the literature review on social cohesion, Siddique (2011) states, social cohesion is built when people consider themselves the

stakeholders of their society. It is understood that ownership is an element of social cohesion. As such, this theme of ownership is developed based on the review of literature on social cohesion.

According to the Volunteer Now 2011 report, local people invest their time and energy in those programs of which they feel the ownership by being involved in the process. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) claim, genuine participation increases a sense of ownership among local people. According to them participatory communication empowers people to engage in their communities, feel committed to, and be able to have the ownership of problems (2009). Development communication claims that ownership of development projects by participants sustains the project in longer term. Waisbord (n.d.) explains that according to participatory approach, changes are not possible if communities do not have a sense of ownership on the project and are not engaged in the development process actively.

One of the participants, the CARE International representative, stated that during implementation of the NSP self-confidence and motivation is increased among communities. Through participation in their project they feel ownership of the project. He further explained, Ownership develops a sense of responsibility among people, which makes them feel accountable towards the projects implemented by them, and therefore, they feel responsible to protect those projects. According to community members, the NSP is an effective program due to its structure. A community member during interview responded, “this is the NSP that allows us to decide collectively whether it is about having a well for drinking water, a road for better transportation, or having a clinic in our village.” According to community members and CDC members, the NSP has given communities ownership of their development.

Participants, both community members and CDC members, described that CDC members are chosen from the community; hence community members will support them too. In regards to community members' support for continuing the NSP program a community member said, "the community will contribute to the possible extent to sustain the CDC." A CDC member believed that after the establishment of the NSP and formation of CDCs, people participated cooperatively in all projects in their community because they felt they had ownership of the projects. According to most of the participants, the NSP cannot sustain without international communities' or government's support and funding, but people will sustain the CDCs in their communities because they have chosen them and they have seen positive results.

The findings illustrated that people want to be involved in making the decisions that affect their lives. They want to be deciders for themselves. According to community members and CDC members, community members understand their needs and priorities more than the outsiders; therefore, they support having the CDCs members from their own community. A community member, when asked about CDC in their community, responded:

Now we are able to elect our representatives as CDC members, which means now people from our own community will decide for us who knows our problems and needs. Whereas, earlier, the government or other organizations would implement a project without consulting community elders; therefore, most of those projects were unsuccessful and unusable.

Most of the community members who were interviewed illustrated that they support the activities and projects that they decide and implement. According to a CDC member, "people participated willingly in the project in our community because they knew it is for them, and will help in improving their life." Similarly, a community member, while asked about their participation in the NSP, stated, "we do support this program and any program that is for our

benefit and is decided by us.” According to another community member, the NSP has been able to change peoples’ behaviour. He further stated:

With the NSP program I see a lot of changes in our community and in people’s behaviour. Now people think more about community development than before, which I think is a social change. And other change, which I see, is that money is spent on right projects that truly benefit people.

Most of the community members and CDC members highlighted that if people are given the ownership and if people are provided with the needed opportunity to lead a project or an activity that affects their life, they likely to change their behaviour and increase their sense of community building and togetherness. As a community member said during the interview, “to have the opportunity to identify basic needs of your community and have the liberty to be involved in the implementation process, itself gives the impetus to the community members to extend their utmost contribution.”

The interview findings demonstrated that ownership likely changes people’s behaviour towards an activity or project or even a place. They become more concerned about its protection and sustainability. They share concerns for a project or place that they consider important to and common among them. For example, a CDC member described:

Our community decided to implement a project that will provide clean drinking water to the village. We decided on the project collectively and implemented it. After the completion of the project we asked community members to help in protecting and maintaining the generator and paying the workers. Now the community collects money every month and we still, after four years, have access to clean water.

The CARE International representative also shared his experience from one of the villages, he stated:

When we first started the National Solidarity Program in one of our target villages, people were not interested, especially, young generation. They thought we came to their village to inform them about a project and leave, but we explained the whole program and they understood that we were there to help them and that they would be leading the program. We saw a change in their behaviour. They were more willing to participate.

The interview findings also demonstrated that a sense of ownership fosters people's participation and, in turn, this participation increases a sense of team building. For example, a CDC member, when asked about the community's cooperation with them, replied, "our community has cooperated with us a lot. They were involved in every step of implementation of the project. They knew that this is their project, and therefore, they all worked together to complete the project." Another community member stated, "both parties [community members and CDC members] have realised the fact that they should have a good understanding to achieve something and this understanding has paved the way for creation of good atmosphere of communication and as well as relation."

Two sub-themes – 'sense of responsibility' and 'sense of contribution,' emerged from the theme 'ownership.' According to participants (community members, CDC members, and facilitating partner), if people are given the ownership of their development, they are likely to feel responsible to protect and sustain it; and therefore, they will likely make utmost contribution to it.

**Sense of responsibility.** The sub-theme of sense of responsibility emerged from the data. Participants repeatedly demonstrated that ownership develops a sense of responsibility among people. According to community members and CDC members, if people are involved in the project they feel the ownership of it and responsibility to protect and maintain it. For example, a community member mentioned during the interview, "I see the outcomes of this program very

useful. In other projects there was some carelessness among people; they would not think to protect it because it was not done by them.” He further added, “it is very simple, people protect those things that belong to them. We also have given our time and energy in these projects and now we will take care of it.”

CDC members showed a sense of responsibility towards people in the community since people elect them as their representatives and as such expected to work for the people and the community. As one of the CDC members said, “when I was selected as a CDC member I felt responsible towards my peoples’ vote. They trusted me and selected me to represent them. It is a very big and noble responsibility.” Similarly, another CDC member stated, “as I said we have the responsibility now towards our peoples’ trust that they gave us in the form of their votes.”

Community members demonstrated during their interviews that when they are given the opportunity to identify the basic needs of their community and have the liberty to engage in the implementation process, they feel responsible towards that project. Community members also expressed that to fulfil their responsibilities towards the project and community they desire to extend their contribution and work voluntarily for its sustainability. For example, a community member stated

We came short in our budget once and it deemed necessary that the villagers should provide labour; after the decision, which was made jointly by both the Community Development Council and the elders of the community, a timetable was set according to which community members had to do the labour work in the project.

According to a community member, in order to develop a sense of responsibility and nation building among people, public awareness campaigns are required so that people should know not only about their rights but also their responsibilities towards their land and people.

Community members and CDC members, while asked about their opinion on joint projects, showed their support for the joint projects with other villages and communities. They also supported the idea of having one large project between two communities or even provinces that will benefit on a larger level. Community members also demonstrated that in order to have a joint project between two villages or communities there should be a common benefit among these villages, which will motivate them to work together. As a community member said, “I totally agree with conducting joint projects, but once the basic needs of every community is fulfilled, only after that they can work on large projects that will be needed by both communities, such as building an electricity dam.” However, they also expressed concerns for such large projects. Participants, both community members and CDC members, described that joint projects need a higher level of harmonization among communities; therefore, they should have a common objective. As a community member described, “[joint projects] need to have strong Community Development Councils in the area along with the government’s active involvement and all the community’s agreement on a particular project; otherwise it will not be successful and will be a waste of time and money.”

The findings exhibit that people feel responsible towards a project or a place when they are part of its development process. A CDC member during the interview said, “[community members] have decided for the project in the village and they feel responsible to sustain it for longer time.” When people invest their time and energy to a task or a project they are more likely to protect it. Thus, a sense of responsibility emerges with ownership.

**Sense of contribution.** Referring to the indicators of solidarity described in chapter two, there is solidarity among people when they are willing to contribute to achieve a common objective. Participants in the interviews discussed the sub-theme of the sense of contribution.

According to CDC members, people now contribute to an activity in the community based on their ability. A CDC member demonstrated a case when their community faced shortage of money during implementation of a project due to the rise in prices of cement and other construction material needed in the project. Therefore, CDC asked the community members to provide help for the completion of the project. He further stated that people provided help both by providing labour and in kind. The CDC member continued, “when we implemented our drinking water project people did contribute their share even more than the 10% that they are required to contribute. Community members collected money and we were able to cover the gap in the budget.” There was another case described by another CDC member where they needed to complete a project on time but due to the lack of workers they were not able to do so. Consequently, they approached community members for help. Community members came forward to help and eventually they were able to complete the project on time. The CARE International representative also described cases where community members contributed by donating their private land for joint projects such as school and health clinic construction.

The CARE International representative further described that the NSP is based on the Afghan traditions of “Ashar,” or community members working together on a voluntary basis to improve their community, and “Jirga,” councils comprised of respected members of the community. The program’s structure promotes the concept of working together and a sense of volunteering for community betterment. People easily adopted and accepted this structure because it was already embedded in Afghan culture.

According to a community member, volunteer work is a part of the culture in Afghanistan, especially among rural people, but due to the war and decades of conflict this was not practiced a lot among the youth. After the establishment of the NSP in communities, the

young generation is more prone to taking part in projects and are now members of CDCs.

Participants also described that in their village now youth have taken the lead. They are working for and contributing to the development of their village and community. However, they still have full time jobs but they are also working to initiate different activities for their village's development.

The findings reveal that people contribute to the development of their community if they are involved in the process from the beginning; therefore, to develop a sense of contribution among people it is required to involve them in the process of their own development. According to a CDC member, "[people] did contribute for this specific project both financially and by providing labour. They do participate eagerly if they know it is for their betterment." The findings also show that if there is a common, benefit people would be willing to contribute even at higher scales.

### **Participatory Society**

Development communication emphasises participation. According to development communication, people should be the agents of development in their society. This development is possible when they participate in the process from the beginning to the end. People should decide the changes and development that affect their life. According to Msibi and Penzhorn (2010), participatory communication requires active involvement of beneficiaries in all stages of development. People involve in two-way communication throughout the project to achieve a common goal (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010). Msibi and Penzhorn state:

A true participatory communication can only come about when development planners and the people involved work together throughout the decision-making process, when

genuine dialogue takes place, and when people are empowered to control the action taken (p. 226).

Participants in this study described that they have contributed eagerly to the projects implemented by the NSP. The CARE International representative illustrated that people in communities actively participated in all steps of the NSP program otherwise it would have been impossible to implement any project. Most of the participants (community members, CDC members, and facilitating partner) seemed to believe that the NSP has established a participatory society. A community member described that they are now required by the NSP to implement the projects that they decide by themselves, in a collective manner. He stated, “the structure of the NSP requires us to do all the work from planning to implementation and maintenance, which can not be done by one person or a small group.” It was also found that community members now have the feeling that if they need a better and quality life they have to work together with each other and with the CDC members. A community member stated, “CDC members and community members have understood now that they need each other’s help in every step to implement, complete, and sustain their project; therefore, now they support and help each other.” Community members and CDC members also provided an example in their village where they contributed an amount of money every month for maintenance and functioning of generator and to pay the fuel and salary of workers so that they can sustain their tube well project for long term. However, according to community members, although they have financial problems, they do participate because it is for their benefit.

According to community members, now they have the liberty to participate in very important decisions of their community, and when people have this liberty they develop the attitude and desire to work voluntarily for the community and village development and extend

their contribution. For example a community member described, “the reason people in our community participate so eagerly in the program is that they are involved in every step of the [NSP establishment] process and they have the freedom to express their views. When you give people the freedom to speak they will come and participate at any cost.” Community members and CDC members also illustrated the need of having such a council, which can bring people together. According to them this council (the CDC) is a common reason among people to meet. As one of the community members said during the interview, “such a council is very important for smooth running of the program. This council is a good means to bring people together.” Similarly, a CDC member explained, “this shura [council] is different than our traditional shura, we meet regularly, and I believe it is a good means to connect people.”

The findings reveal that participation and coming together for a reason increase a sense of unity and togetherness among people. The more the involvement is in a community by people, the more participatory that community becomes. According to a community member, “this program has been able to bring people together; it brings communities together.” It is also found that people are involved in every step of the NSP and the projects they implement, which illustrates a participatory society model. People are connected to each other for a common reason that is development of their community. CDCs are also a means of bringing people together and motivating them to participate in their community’s development. For example a community member explained during the interview, “our Community Development Council has been able to have peoples’ support. People’s support is a clear indicator of their trust in CDC members that motivates them to participate more actively [in the community].”

The data also reveal that people show their active participation when they have a common benefit to achieve. Participants, among community members, frequently mentioned they aim to work together for a common good. As one of the community members said:

Me, and everyone I know in the village, are willing to participate in a project that will benefit everyone. We have experienced it during our tube well project. Access to clean water was the most important and common need among villagers, and that is why they eagerly participated to complete the project.

**Cooperation for collective good.** This sub-theme demonstrates the indicator of solidarity, described in chapter two, that solidarity is seen among people when they are ready to work together for achieving a common goal. Cooperation for a collective benefit was discussed repeatedly among participants.

According to the CDC members and facilitating partner, people are now involved in their community development by working together. Their collective action is visible by their participation in different activities of the NSP, for example, according to the CARE International representative, “if there was not peoples’ support none of the NSP activities would have been implemented.” He further stated, “CDC elections, making decisions collectively on the projects, and participating in monitoring and evaluation of the ongoing projects, all require peoples’ participation.” In addition, a community member said, “we cooperated with our CDC throughout the process otherwise how would they continue to work.” A CDC member, when asked if they have ever approached people for help, replied by saying:

Yes we have approached people for help in certain times. There were times when we needed labour and we had very less time to complete the project; we needed more people to work. We announced in the community and asked people to provide us with help with

labour. And, they have come forward to help because it was their project, and they felt it was their own and they worked for it.

He further stated, “to make the work easier for community members they set a timetable to work on the project so that they can help in completing the project on time and also take care of their household.” Community members seemed to show their desire for future work, which would benefit everyone, and they seem to be willing to work together for any activity that would help everyone. A community member illustrated, “so far we had one project but we should not be satisfied with only one project. We should think about further projects that will benefit us all on larger scales.” Another community member stated, “our CDC members are working and preparing community members to think about other projects for future, even with other communities to have larger projects with more benefits.”

Some community members did not support joint projects at this stage. According to them, the initial needs of each community should be satisfied first. For example, a CDC member said, “we support joint projects and we are working to find a common need between us and our neighbouring community but I think we should first think about the important needs inside our own community.” Joint project ideas seemed to be supported more by more educated members in the community than those who are not that educated. For example, a community member, who is a doctor, indicated:

Joint projects are very important discussion. I support such initiative that will bring different communities and tribes together. I will give you an example, our province needs an electricity dam; we can implement such a project by connecting different districts, and I am sure people will support such a project because electricity is needed in every village and district.

In contrast, when the same question was asked from another community member, who had primary level of education, said:

I do not support joint projects, it will create conflict, and our needs and other communities' needs are different. Joint projects have created conflicts and tensions among some of our neighbouring communities. People cannot agree on one project. I do not support joint projects at this stage.

The findings showed that level of education and understanding of issues in a community also play a role in developing a sense of unity and togetherness among people. As seen from the interview data, those who are educated seem to value unity and collectiveness and support collective action for common benefit of different communities.

The findings also demonstrated that if people are allowed to participate in their own development and prioritize their needs, they would likely cooperate to achieve the collective goal. For example, people in the NSP program have cooperated with each other and their CDC members to achieve their objectives and have kept their conflicts and problems aside. They have given importance to their collective good more than the problems they have with each other.

**Sense of acceptance.** One of the indicators of solidarity described in chapter two, states that solidarity is seen among people if they are willing to resolve their conflicts and respect each other. The sub-theme, sense of acceptance, emerged from participants' interviews. The data showed that if there is active participation of people in a society they are most likely to develop a sense of acceptance, resolve tensions, and respect each other's views. Therefore, this sub-theme is presented under the major theme of participatory society.

The council of Europe (2000) describes:

Acceptance of diversity and the interaction between cultures foster harmonious relations between people, enrich their lives and provide them with creativity to respond to new challenges. It is not the denial, but rather, the recognition of differences that keeps a community together (p. 11).

Social cohesion and solidarity requires a sense of acceptance among people. Solidarity requires cooperative action and cooperative action requires people to work together and respect each other's views (USATAA, 2013).

According to the CARE International representative, with the implementation of the NSP a positive outcome is visible among people, which can be equated with solidarity and unity among them. He provides an example of a village where people, due to conflict and problems between them, were divided in groups and would even pray separately<sup>7</sup>. When the NSP covered the village, all the village members came together to select their projects, elect their CDC members, and implement collectively the decided projects. Participants, both community members and CDC members, suggested that in order to bring people together and reduce the conflict among them, they should accept each other as part of one community. When community members were asked about strengths and weaknesses of their CDC members, the majority discussed only the positive points. A community member described, "well I think if we work we do mistakes. No one is free from flaws but the important point is to correct the mistake on time."

The interview findings showed that when people work together for a common benefit, they accept each other's flaws. They are likely to be less critical and more accepting. Working

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<sup>7</sup> Performing prayer collectively is of great importance in Islam. The main purpose of praying together is to build social relations among people.

together and interacting with each other more often increases the understanding among people.

For example a community member said during the interview:

I do not see a lot of negative points or weaknesses in our CDC members. They are honest and transparent people. Whenever there was a problem we solved it together, and now we understand that in larger projects we do face problems but that does not mean we should forget about our main goal.

Similarly, a CDC member described, “community members support us a lot. Yes, in the beginning they were critical about things but when they got involved in every step [of the project in the community]. They understood that problems come along the way. And, we do solve problems collectively by discussing with elders and community members.”

The study also found that the NSP, through its participatory approach, was able to increase communication among people and people interacted often with each other, which reduced problems between them and increased understanding and sense of acceptance. The CARE International representative described, “there were villages where we saw conflict among people. When the NSP was established in the village people were required to attend meetings and gatherings. We observed that after sometime these meetings and gatherings helped in reducing and even eliminating conflicts.”

The study revealed that there were types of acceptance among community people, which included:

1. Accepting each other’s flaws and working together to improve it;
2. Accepting the problems between them and resolving them together;
3. Accepting each other’s view and deciding collectively to improve living conditions in the community; and

4. Accepting the differences among each other and respecting them.

Interview findings also revealed that people are now willing to accept the young generation taking responsibilities. Youth are elected as CDC members by community members. A community member illustrated role of youth in CDCs by saying:

Prior to the establishment of the National Solidarity Program we had elders' committee (not a Shura), and its members were responsible to discuss different issues but not on a regular bases. They were the elders of our village, but now we have young members in the Community Development Council who have filled the positions of elders. They are young and energetic and also motivated people. They also have the ability to run the projects, and thus, have strong support from people in their community.

## **Trust**

Trust is a major component of social cohesion and solidarity. As discussed in the literature review, one of the indicators of solidarity is trust and respect for each other. Participants made frequent references to the issue of trust among people and CDC members during the interviews. According to the opinion survey by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (2005-2007), a meaningful relationship is developed with trust among people; trust helps to encourage people to work together for achieving mutual goals and increase the effectiveness of community projects. Reciprocity, responsibility, and moral obligations develop trust among people (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, 2005-2007). Wlech et al. (2005) believe that trust is important in mobilizing individuals, encouraging them to work towards a common goal, and making community projects more effective.

World Bank, Communication Initiative, and Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO) (2007) report describe that development communication is about "seeking

change at different levels, including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skill, building policies, debating and learning for sustainable and meaningful change” (p. xxxiii). Trust is also an important component in development communication. Trust is required among people to work together for sustainable development of their society.

The interview findings revealed that the majority of community members showed their trust towards their Community Development Councils. Most of them described their CDC members as honest, transparent, and hardworking people. CDC members described that peoples’ trust is shown to them through their votes. According to community members, their CDC members have been able to keep their support in every phase of the project. The CARE International representative described, “if people did not support and defend the NSP, it would have not been possible to establish CDCs or any other sub committees.” The community members, through a democratic voting, elect CDC members. According to community members, they have elected their CDC members, which show that they trust them and will support them. As one of the community members said, “we support our CDC members and we trust them. If we did not trust them we would have not selected them as our representatives.” Community members also described that CDC members have been transparent throughout the project. They are responsible to report to the community about the spending of money and project status. A community member during the interview stated, “I do not see a lot of negative points or weakness in the NSP and CDC in our village, we have very honest and trustworthy CDC members who work very hard and for common benefits of everyone.” People also have a role in monitoring the work; therefore, CDC members have to be truthful while reporting to people. A CDC member described, “people trusted us by voting and electing us, and now we are accountable to their votes. On the other hand, people themselves are involved in every step of the

projects. They are aware of everything; therefore, no CDC member can engage in false reporting to the community.” The CARE International representative also described the process as; “trust is developed among people by sharing transparent information. In a project, if a community needs to withdraw an amount of money from the grant allocated to the project, they need three CDC members’ signature on the cheque and witnesses from community. That is how every step is taken in a transparent way.”

Hence, the findings showed that communication can play an important role in building trust among people. People trust each other when there is transparent and truthful information sharing among them, and thus, truthfulness can strengthen the bond among people. According to the CARE International representative, the NSP program has been able to reduce the corruption and increase the transparency through its social audit approach, where monitoring and auditing is done in a transparent way. Community members are involved in the monitoring and evaluation process of projects, implemented in their community. People elect their representatives, which nurtures a sense of competition among people. Every CDC member wants to display his/her honesty and transparency to community members and be truthful to them in order to sustain their position as CDC member.

The interview findings revealed that people trusted their CDC members because they were able to fulfill their promises. As a community member demonstrated in his interview, “we are happy with our CDC members. They are honest and trustworthy people. What ever they have decided so far has been for our benefit.” Findings also exhibit that communication, truthful information sharing, and responsiveness between people and CDC members led to developing ties between them. Trust increases respect among people and, therefore, promotes cooperation. According to a community member, “CDC members of our village are very honest and

responsible who work very hard and for common benefit of every one.” A CDC member illustrated during interview, “we have been able to have our community’s support for such a long time. The reason is that we try our best to be transparent to them and that is why they trust us and cooperate with us.”

### **Conflict Resolution through Communication**

As described in chapter two, solidarity is strengthened among people when they resolve conflicts among them and give importance to their mutual interests. Murshed-e-Jahan, Salayo, and Kanagaratman (2009) claim that communication is needed among people to understand, resolve, and manage conflicts. Stephan (2008) also believes that intergroup communication increases understanding between group members and enables participants to interact with members of other groups. Communication plays an important role in resolving conflict and issues in a group. Balliet (2010) argues that communication during a conflict and dilemma increases cooperative behaviour among participants. In addition, according to Stiefel (1999), people need a common place to meet and interact; the absence of such a common place often forms problems and conflicts among them. Active communication, according to Emke, Ruce, and Wilkinson (n.d.), encourages people for action to respond to a crisis.

Most of the participants, both community members and CDC members, described different cases where communities were able to resolve their problems and conflicts during the meetings held by CDCs and FPs. A community member described, “before people were not able to resolve most of their problems but today their problems are being solved with the support of the NSP. CDC, established by the NSP, is a very useful council. We bring our problems there and discuss to solve them.” Community members further demonstrated that even when they did not have any project, their CDCs function and they were not only involved in issues regarding

the project but in some cases they resolved protracted conflicts too. They also work on the social and economic issues that arise in their community such as resolving tensions between two families, providing financial help to a family, helping a family during a funeral or any happy occasion, i.e., wedding. For example, a community member said, “CDC in our village is not only responsible to decide for development projects and their sustainability, but they have also taken the responsible to take care of other social or economic issue that might rise in the village.” Many communities have been able to resolve their internal problems by meeting and communicating with each other after the establishment of the NSP. The CARE International Representative described, “CDCs have been able to resolve conflicts in their community. CDC members meet with community members every month on a regular basis and discuss different issues.” Different issues are discussed in the meetings held by CDC in a community. These issues are not only related to the development projects implemented in the community but they are also social issues that people may face in the community. For example, a community member stated, “in the meeting we do not only discuss what next project we need, or how to maintain the project, but we also discuss social issues such as if we see a community member is facing economic problem, [for example, providing financial help during an important occasion such as wedding, funeral, or sickness], we discuss and try to solve it in a collective manner.” He further illustrated, “when we know there is someone sick in our village we even talk about that in our meeting in terms of how to help, or if there is a funeral or discuss a happy occasion. Everything is discussed there.”

CDC members and community members also described that talking to each other and discussing the problem with each other can reduce conflicts among people. For example, a community member said during the interview, “the good point about our CDC is that they do not

let conflicts or problems to grow. They bring the issue immediately in the meetings held in the community. And, every problem has a solution if it is discussed.” Community members seemed confident that they could solve their issues themselves if they were together, as one of them stated, “we have experienced it with the NSP that we can solve any problem if we are united and together.”

The findings also revealed that people, through the NSP program, work together, meet, and communicate frequently, which helped in resolving conflicts among them. The CARE International representative described, “in one of our target districts a deep well project was identified as a need by the residents. This district consisted of two main villages. While implementing this project it was extremely difficult to identify an appropriate place for the well, where residents of both villages could have easy access, and could use the well jointly.” He further stated, “with the establishment of CDC through the NSP, both villages were given the opportunity to deliberate on the issue and identify an appropriate place for the construction of the well where both villages could have easy access.” Subsequently, a community member also alluded, “the deep well was an issue among us. Every village would want the well to be constructed near them, but then our CDC called a meeting, and the issue was resolved in the meeting and a place was selected for the well which is easily accessible to everyone.”

**Dialogue at community level.** For a project to be participatory, it requires a two-way communication flow (Msibi and Penzhorn, 2010). Participatory communication encourages a communication process that allows knowledge sharing on an equal basis rather than just disseminating information (Melkote, 1991). Mefalopulos and World Bank (2008) state, “no matter what kind of project—agriculture, infrastructure, water, governance, health—it is always valuable, and often essential, to establish dialogue among relevant stakeholders. Dialogue is the

necessary ingredient in building trust, sharing knowledge, and ensuring mutual understanding” (p. 8).

Community members believed that with the establishment of CDCs, community members meet more frequently. It has enhanced interaction among people at the community level. Community members also stated that before, they would meet in the mosque for prayers but there would not be a lot of time to sit and talk to each other. CDCs are a reason for people in communities to meet. Community members also mentioned that they were required to meet and participate in CDC meetings. And, most of them participate not only because it is a requirement by the NSP program, but also because they want to be informed about every issue in the community. A community member stated, “CDC now meets regularly; they have monthly meetings, and there is regular communication and interaction among people and CDC members.” According to community members, the CDC in their village is successful because they were able to gain and maintain the support of community members by involving them in every decision-making and consultation process with them on every issue. Relatedly, a CDC member mentioned, “there are neighbouring communities where CDCs are not functioning anymore. Our village CDC is still functioning, and it is because we have involved our community members in every step [of the project]. We consult with them on every issue.”

It was found during the interviews that in most villages the CDCs do not only facilitate the implementation of development projects but also help in resolving social and economic issues that rose in the village. According to a community member, “our CDC continues to exist and function despite the project being completed.” In addition, he stated, “we also refer our social issues to them.” Community members also said that their CDC and community members

meet every month or every 15 days and discuss different issues such as maintenance of deep well, collecting money for mosque, or helping a community member.

The study also found that communication between community members and CDCs is a two way process. CDC members decide on issues with community members. Their frequent meetings with community members resolve issues in a collective discussion and decision.

### **Community Structure**

The theme, community structure, emerged from the data. Community members and CDC members continuously described the role of a community's structure in building solidarity and social cohesion. However, this theme did not emerge based on the indicators of solidarity and social cohesion but because the participants emphasised it, and the researcher considered it an important theme for the study.

Community members and CDC members discussed differences in community structure. The diversity present in some communities, according to them, can affect social cohesion and solidarity among people. Servaes (2002) states:

Cultures are not homogeneous and bounded entities, but rather dynamic, heterogeneous and open-ended. Some level of culture coherence must always exist, but this has often been overstated. Deviance, inconsistency, contradiction and disagreement are parts of any culture (p.48).

According to community members, there are cultural, social, and some other differences among different communities, which can have an effect on their unity and togetherness. As a community member mentioned, "it is easy to bring people together in a homogeneous community." He gave an example of his community stating, "it was easy to bring people

together in our community. We belong to the same tribe and our ancestors were brothers.”

Community members, CDC members, and facilitating partner also believed that elders can play an important role in managing differences and developing an understanding among people in a community. As a CDC member alluded, “in Afghanistan, elders are respected a lot. And, most of the time, communities accept their decision without questioning them.” He further mentioned, “we have also referred to elders in our community when we were not able to solve a problem. They have played a very important role in bringing people together.” Community members also believed that if the number of educated members is high in a community, they will likely be able to manage any kind of conflict and problem. As a community member said, “I think our village did not have major problems because we have educated members with us and everyone’s knowledge helped us to maintain the unity during the program and even after it.”

Interestingly, the findings revealed that consensus building is easier in a community that is less diverse. Community structure plays an important role in building trust and cooperation among people. Communities, where people relate to each other, have more trust in each other, and these people will likely be more willing to work together than those who are not related. There should be a common ground among individuals of a society to help build trust and understanding and nurture cooperation and solidarity. The study also found that solidarity and social cohesion are not developed easily in diverse communities. A community member mentioned, “our neighbouring village had conflict during selecting their project.” When asked about the reason, he stated, “it is a diverse village; different tribes live there, so every tribe wants to be the decider and show their power.”

The findings show that community members respect the elders of their community, and their opinions are considered influential; therefore, the elders play an important role in bringing community members together and motivating them for cooperation.

In conclusion, participants believed that the NSP's participatory approach has been successful in bringing people together. Through the interviews with participants it is apparent that if people are provided with the required opportunity to decide, they are motivated to participate and work for a collective benefit. Respondents believed that if people are given the ownership of their development, they are more likely to develop a sense of responsibility. Additionally, some participants also believed that people get united and work collectively when there is a common benefit among them.

Participants often noted that solidarity is easily built in homogeneous communities. Almost all of the participants believed that participation develops communication, which increases dialogue among people and reduces conflicts. They also noted that common benefits motivate collective action and increase people's contribution.

Discussion of the interview findings is presented in the next chapter. This discussion will also address the research questions. The interview findings will be discussed in light of the theoretical framework of development communication. The findings will also be analyzed and compared in relation to the literature reviewed for this study.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one discusses the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion, part two discusses the role of

CDCs in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion, and finally, part three debates solidarity and social cohesion through the NSP program. The chapter discusses the findings through the theoretical lens.

The following section aims to answer the research questions that are as follows:

- RQ1. How can participatory communication strengthen solidarity and social cohesion? What role can participatory communication play in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan?
- RQ2. Have the Community Development Councils been engaged in strengthening social cohesion and solidarity among people in the Khost province of Afghanistan? If so, how?
- RQ3. Has the National Solidarity Program been engaged in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion through participatory communication in Afghanistan? If so, how?

### **Role of Participatory Communication in Strengthening Solidarity and Social Cohesion**

Connection between social cohesion and sustainable development, in recent years, has received augmented attention in both development theory and practice (King, Sami, & Snilstveit, 2010). A number of studies (for example: Easterly et al., 2006; Ferroni et al., 2008; Haymani, 2009; Ritzen et al., 2000; World Bank, 2005) have exhibited a strong connection between social cohesion and development (King, Sami, & Snilstveit, 2010).

This study discusses the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion looking at the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan as a case study. The research questions are discussed in light of development communication theory.

As seen in the previous chapter, the findings from the thesis illustrate a number of cases where the NSP has been able to communicate its main objective of bringing people together. Conversely, there were also cases that demonstrated the NSP's failure in strengthening social cohesion in larger communities.

Paulo Freire (as cited in Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) believed in giving voice to marginalized population of a society by giving them power, time, voice, and space to define their problems and find solutions for them. From the study participants' perspectives, it was found that the NSP, through its participatory approach, has given marginalized populations an opportunity to identify their needs and problems by encouraging them to communicate with each other. In addition, Paulo Freire (as cited in Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) defines dialogue as, "the encounter between men in order to name the world. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their words must first claim this right and prevent the continuation of this act of exclusion" (p. 10). Similarly, a community member believed that if the government wants to bring fundamental improvements in the country, the process should start from marginalized and excluded populations in rural areas of Afghanistan.

Free and open dialogue is the main element of participatory communication (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Participatory communication ensures inclusion of all the stakeholders, especially, the most marginalized by providing a voice to them (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). To have a dialogic communication, according to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009), a catalyst is required to facilitate the process. In the NSP program Community Development Councils (CDC) facilitates this process. The study found that with the establishment of the NSP in communities and formation of CDCs, interaction among people increased. CDCs hold meetings every month where community members participate and discuss different issues related to community

development and social problems raised in their community. Participants believed that CDC is a good reason for people to come together. They also demonstrated that through CDC meetings in their community, people interact more frequently.

Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) argue that in addition to dialogue and reflection, participatory communication is also strongly action oriented. The study also found increase in people's participation for development of their community. People have supported their CDCs to achieve a common goal that benefited them all equally. There have been cases where community members had acted collectively to maintain their projects. For example, community members in a village collected money to help in completing their tube well project. In another case, community members contributed by providing financial support to maintain their clean drinking water project. The study showed that people had contributed collectively, both in kind and by providing labour to achieve their development goal and overcome problems. As Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) also describe, the process of empowerment in participatory communication not only puts emphasis on reflection of problems but also on action, i.e., acting collectively to deal with problems identified.

Colletta and Cullen (2000) and Woolcock and Narayan (1999) consider social cohesion an important element for sustainable peace through strengthening interpersonal and intergroup networks, trust, and reciprocity. Building trust is important in a situation where different stakeholders are involved (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Trust built among stakeholders help in developing dialogue and jointly seeking solutions for the problems (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Therefore, two-way communication is necessary to reunite different perceptions and prioritize development plans (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). Similarly, the participatory approach of communication by the NSP has seemed to increase interaction among people and foster a sense

of acceptance among them. The community member participants demonstrated their belief that the NSP had helped to increase interaction among people, which, in turn, had helped to reduce the criticizing behaviour among people. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a community member stated during the interview, “well I think if we work we do mistakes. No one is free from flaws but the important point is to correct the mistake on time.” Another community member also described that the NSP program had created jobs and engaged all community members that also improved community members’ economic condition. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) also claims, participatory communication becomes a tool, by engaging all relevant stakeholders, for reducing poverty and social exclusion (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009).

As mentioned in chapter four, building solidarity in heterogeneous communities is a challenge. As Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) believe, not all the communities can be homogeneous. There can be communities full of tension, differences in opinions and lifestyle, conflict, and inequality (2009). The study also found that homogenous communities are more likely to come together than heterogeneous communities. As some CDC members mentioned repeatedly that they were successful in bringing together village members and involving them in every step of the program. According to them their community is less diverse. They also highlighted problems and tensions present in neighbouring villages. Village members believed that there are cultural differences and differences in the structure of communities, which also affect solidarity and social cohesion in those communities. Participants described that in heterogeneous societies elders can play an important role in uniting people. Participants also suggested that elders play an influential role in terms of bringing together community members’ thoughts and ideas. They described that elders are influential in Afghan societies; therefore, they can play an important role in bringing people together. For example, some community members

described the case of their neighbouring village where elders helped CDC members in gathering people and resolving their conflict upon project selection process. Tufte and Melfalopulos (2009) also suggest that such communities should be treated “as a sum of different groups rather than a homogeneous group” (p. 19).

The dialogic approach of participatory communication values communication in revealing oppressive conditions to encourage collective action (Wilkins, 2008). Communication articulates social relations between people and, therefore, participation is not possible without communication (Serveas, 1999, as cited in Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010). According to Msibi and Penzhorn (2010), there can be true participation only when there is involvement of people and development planners throughout the decision-making process, a genuine dialogue, and when people are empowered to control the actions taken. As Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) argue, “participation means to listen to what others say, respecting the counterpart’s attitude, and having mutual trust” (p. 227). Participants in this study also showed a sense of accepting each other’s flaws and respecting each other’s views. From the interviews it was found that community members participate in their community’s development because they consider it an important issue; therefore, they are more likely to leave their conflicts aside and work collectively to achieve their development goals. They resolve their problems for the sake of mutual goals. As Cavaye (n.d.) also states, “it is through participation in their community that people rethink problems and expand contact and networks; building social capital” (Understanding community development, Para. 3).

This study found that community members realized that in order to achieve a common goal they have to act collectively because development objectives cannot be achieved individually. According to CHA, another FP for the NSP, elections are held in community

groups, and members of different groups come together and decide for their villages, which can lead to solidarity among different groups and tribes in a community (Merchant, 2010). Flora and Flora (1993, as cited in Cavaye, n.d.) describe that community development needs interaction, communication, and collective action by members. Smith and Laitinen (2009) also illustrate Tylor's point on solidarity that a community requires shared goals that matter to the majority of them in order to act effectively in a collective way. This study also shows that community members are willing to work together if outcomes of their work improve their living conditions equally and collectively. Participants stated that they invest their time and energy in the activities that are important and effective across their lives. For example, community members helped in completing the tube well project by providing both financial help and labour because this project was an important and a common need among them. Community members alluded that they support joint projects and large-scale projects if there is a mutual benefit that will affect them all equally.

The study identified a sense of belonging to each other and to their community, evidenced when participants continuously use words such as "we," "our community," and "our CDC members". As O'Sullivan-Lango (2011) argues, "although manifestation of solidarity are not binding, the sharing of common ground has a subjective and emotional dimension for individual, for which a feeling of obligation towards "us" emerges (p. 3.8). Allport (1954, as cited in O'Sullivan-Lango, 2011) proposes that solidarity is possible among small and large groups if there is contact and interaction among them, and that the outcome of such interaction is positive. This study also reveals that people support their CDC members and demonstrates the likelihood of sustaining it because they have seen important and benefit outcomes from their work. Community members demonstrated that their most important need was having access to

clean water and their CDC identified and prioritized this need and helped in resolving it.

Therefore, today every household has access to clean water.

It is important to note that women were not part of CDCs in Khost. Due to the security conditions of the country and the province, women's participation in the NSP and CDC has become a challenge. Women are not able to participate visibly in these projects. Although, they are not members of the CDC and do not attend the meetings held in their community, their problems are considered while selecting a project. For example, the drinking water project that was implemented in a village. Male members described during the interviews that women faced many problems when there was no facility for water. A male community member described:

[Women] had to go far to get water because men mostly would be busy outside the house. They have to take care of home and children, wash clothes, dishes, and many other activities that need water. After the implementation of this project they get water in their house and can fulfil their needs very easily. They were in more trouble than men.

The above responses imply that although women in the community did not have physical presence in the meetings and CDCs, their needs were considered during project selection. Communities now think more about common benefits than individual desires. However, this *priority* cannot justify women's exclusion from the NSP in the Khost province. Although, different studies show that exclusion of women is not the case in every province in Afghanistan, as described in chapter two, there are some provinces where women are actively participating in the development process through the NSP.

Fearon, Humphreys, and Weinstein (2008) argue that through the participatory approach of a community-driven program with a successful community mobilization, it is possible to reduce tightness present in a community and encourage collective action. Participants' responses

showed a connection between collective action and conflict resolution. They described that with the establishment of CDC in their community they are motivated to work together for their community development. Participants also believed that working together also helped in reducing tensions among community members. As Earley and Gibson (1998) also claim, “a general aspect of how humans live concerns the manner in which they aggregate into collectives” (p. 226). Additionally, Etzioni (1968, as cited in Earley & Gibson, 1998) describes, “collectives consist of individuals who are bound together by a number of different relationships” (p. 226). This study also found that through the establishment of the Community Development Councils community members are now connected to their CDC representatives besides having different roles and responsibilities in their particular community. They are bound together for the purpose of their community’s development.

According to Allport (1954, as cited in O’Sullivan-Lango, 2011), communication between members of a group can reduce predisposition and increase engagement. Murtazashvili (2009) states, “theories of repeated games predict that cooperative behaviour will emerge when individuals are engaged in face-to-face, repeated interactions” (p. 154). According to Murtazashvili (2009), cooperative behaviour that exists among Afghan villages may be the result of repetitive interactions among them through the history. This study also showed that continuous interaction among people increases their trust. The NSP requires CDCs to conduct timely meetings and invite community members to discuss different social issues in their community. Participants supported such an initiative of having a common place to meet and they participated in it willingly. The findings exhibit that the NSP has given the rural population (a rather voiceless population) of Afghanistan an opportunity to design their development efforts and decide for their futures. Frequent interactions between CDC members and community

members seemed to increase their trust in each other and reduce conflicts. As mentioned in chapter four, participants believed that transparent information sharing between CDC members and community members increase trust among them and regular meetings held by CDCs in the community increases interaction between community members. These interactions, according to CDC members and community members, have likely helped in resolving tensions among them.

In summary, participatory communication approach by the NSP has been able to reduce the chances of conflict, increase the level of trust between people and their CDCs, and a sense of acceptance among people. However, the NSP still needs to reach the goal of strengthening ‘inter-communal’ solidarity and social cohesion i.e. solidarity at a larger level. We can see the NSP’s success in building solidarity and social cohesion among people in small and homogenous groups and communities, but the goal of strengthening solidarity and social cohesion at the national level is yet to be achieved.

### **CDC’s Role in Strengthening Solidarity and Social Cohesion**

In order to analyze the role of Community Development Councils (CDC) in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion, it was important to find out what community members think of their CDC members and the trust level between CDC and community members.

CDCs are elected bodies in communities responsible to help community members in identifying and prioritizing needs and decision-making (Wardak, 2011). CDC-by law document (2006, as cited in Wardak, 2011) describes the following main objectives of the establishment of CDCs in communities:

- 1- Creation of unity and solidarity among people, and consolidation of cooperation and assistance;
- 2- Consolidation of social justice, transparency, accountability, and book keeping;
- 3- To maintain people supervision, legal rights, and prevention of corruption;
- 4- To maintain active participation of the people for a sound management in the village level;
- 5- [To reduce] poverty and production of the people for a sound management in the village level; and
- 6- To maintain the welfare of the people through extension of development and economical services based on their own wishes, under supervision of their representatives (p. 8).

Wardak (2011) cites Singapore Government's People's Association website, explaining CDC services as follows:

1. Assisting the needy people
2. Bonding the people
3. Connecting the community

Looking at the services, explained by Singapore Government website and CDC by-law in Afghanistan, a CDC is responsible to connect communities, establish relationship between people, and support people in need. CDCs in Afghanistan have similar responsibilities towards their communities, but the question is: have CDCs in Afghanistan been able to connect

communities and people together? In order to answer this question, the study compares the literature review on social cohesion and solidarity, presented in chapter two, to the findings of the study.

As mentioned in chapter two, people need to strengthen solidarity among them in order to improve their living condition. This study also found that community members strongly support their CDC. They are willing to support the CDC and keep it functioning. According to them, in order to improve their living condition and implement appropriate development projects, both parties should be united. According to the participants of this study, CDC is a reason for people to come together. Meetings held by CDCs allow people to discuss different development issues in their community, discuss clashes, and prevent future problems. As Stiefel (1999) also describes, presence of a neutral place for people to meet and talk can strengthen the relationship between them.

Community members continuously described the positive points of their CDC members. According to them, their CDC is a successful council and their CDC members have been able to maintain community members' support.

Community members also mentioned that there are villages and communities where CDCs were not as successful and those CDCs could not be sustained. The reason, according to them, is that people did not trust their CDC members. They have not been able to gain people's trust. Participants also illustrated that CDC members should have a sense of nation building.

Community members also highlighted the role of education in bringing people together and strengthening solidarity and social cohesion. According to community members, education plays an important role in building solidarity and social cohesion. Community members believed

that educated CDC members understand the importance of solidarity in a community and among people. For example, a community member mentioned that the reason their CDC is functioning well is that it consists of educated members. He insisted that if a community wants to benefit from the NSP and have long-term projects, it should be very careful in electing its CDC members.

Collective action, an important element of solidarity, was seen among people. Collective action refers to working together for a common benefit. Participants demonstrated their support and collective action for a common goal such as a shared project like tube well or road construction. They also showed willingness to work collectively for the projects that would benefit everyone equally.

The study also found that the component of trust is important in building relationships. If people do not trust each other, they will less likely support each other. However, community members elect CDC members; CDC members have to gain community members' trust by providing them truthful information about financial and implementation status of projects and be honest and transparent to people. Community members described that they trust their CDC members because they have been transparent and honest to them throughout the project implementation process. This way, we can see that truthful information sharing by CDCs with community members and being transparent strengthen ties between them.

The study also showed peoples' cooperation in all steps of the NSP. According to USATAA (2013), cooperation is an attitude that demonstrates equal rights and power among individuals. Participants demonstrated their equal participation in decision-making, project selection, implementation, and monitoring. As a community member described during the

interview, “we have equal share in everything. Every village member has the right to talk and share his opinion; this is what makes the program our own.”

According to Kearns and Forrest (2000), “in the domain of culture and values, a socially cohesive society is one in which the members share common values which enable them to identify and support common aims and objectives” (p. 997). A number of community members also illustrated the concept of common values among them. For example, a community member mentioned, “the CDC is helping us in identifying common values among us.” He further stated, “we are now able through this program to identify our basic and common objectives.”

According to Kearns and Forrest (2000), “a second interpretation of social cohesion refers to the absence of general conflict in a society and of any challenge to the existing order and system” (p. 998). Participants’ responses highlighted that the establishment of CDC helped in resolving general conflicts and tensions among people in the community. Respondents also demonstrated that CDCs are a good means of establishing social order and social control. Additionally, according to Wrong (1994 as cited in Kearns & Forrest, 2000) by developing social order in a society, members of that society are able to assist one another in achieving a common objective.

To sum up, it seems that CDCs have been involved in bringing people together and motivating them to work for the development of their communities. It is also important to note that although the phenomenon of solidarity exists in Afghan culture and norms through Jirga that brings people together in certain times (Wardak, 2003), CDCs play the role of an enforcing vehicle to further strengthen it. In addition, CDCs seem to make it easy for communities to reach each other and support each other.

### **Solidarity and Social Cohesion through the National Solidarity Program**

The concept of Ashar, practiced in Afghanistan and Central Asia, is a community-based action where community members contribute to the collective good of their village and community, either in kind or by providing labour (Murtazashvili, 2009). In the context of the NSP, the concept of Ashar is demonstrated in the requirement of community members' 10% contribution to the projects (in kind or by providing labour). However, as CARE International representative demonstrated during interview, the concept of cooperation in the form of Ashar is embedded in the Afghan culture; the NSP is nurturing it as a requirement for all the projects. As Boesen (2004) also found in his study, people support cooperative activities because according to them working together is required for solving different social problems such as ethnic and power divisions among people caused by decades of war.

According to Fearon, Humphreys, and Weinstein (2009), prior research implies that externally driven interventions may not be able to significantly change the forms of social interaction in a community. Fearon, Humphreys, and Weinstein (2009) argue that for a community to be able to act collectively requires a process designed by it or one that already is rooted in its traditions.

According to Hoedemaekers, Gordijn, and Pijnenburg (2007), "solidarity can also be based on the principle of reciprocity" (p. 343). Reciprocity, in a general sense, is grounded in the consciousness of being rooted in a community, being dependent on others to shape one's own life, and understand certain goals in life (Hoedemaekers, Gordijn & Pijnenburg, 2007). As illustrated in, chapter four, community members support CDCs and working together because they have experienced the positive outcome of collectiveness for a common purpose of

community development. Community members aim to work voluntarily for shared interest and mutual benefit. Solidarity, as reciprocity, demonstrates forms of active co-operation based on self-interest or shared interest and these forms of co-operation are usually demonstrated as free and voluntary actions (Hoedemaekers, Gordijn & Pijnenburg, 2007). Concerns and commitments of an individual, group, or a society to achieve a shared goal show solidarity, which can be articulated in different ways (Hoedemaekers, Gordijn & Pijnenburg, 2007). The National Solidarity Program, according to Merchant (2010), pursues to sustain local governance through strengthening social cohesion and solidarity among communities. The question remains: has the NSP been able to strengthen solidarity and social cohesion?

Merchant (2010) in his dissertation indicates that increase in cohesion among communities maintains the project in the long-term. As mentioned in chapter two, ethnic division is one of the causes of conflict in Afghanistan. Similarly, ethnic lines may affect solidarity in some cases. For example, Torabi (2007) describes a case in Wardak province of Afghanistan where two different ethnic groups, Pashtun and Tajiks, live. Pashtuns are the majority (80%) and Tajiks are the minority (20%) in this province (Torabi, 2007). However, according to Torabi (2007), there were no visible conflicts among the people in that community, but lack of cohesion among community members could be felt by their weak participation in the NSP.

In contrast, some cultural norms help in strengthening the social cohesion rooted in Afghan culture. Torabi (2007) describes a case in the Logar province where a community member was asked about CDCs accountability and why community members do not question them for the accounts. In answer to it, the village member says that there is a bond of trust among them and CDC members, which does not require questioning. In some cases such a bond of trust among people strengthens their solidarity and increases accountability of CDCs.

Similarly, one of the study participants described in his interview that community members elect their CDC members, they decide to have them as their representatives because they trust them. Torabi (2007) further states, “communities where projects relied heavily on labour also tended to exhibit strong social cohesion” (p. 25). According to Nixon (2008), mutual agreement and consensus building is seen in the NSP during the selection process of projects. Similarly, this study also found that people now decide collectively for their community development. The NSP has developed a social structure in communities that requires people to act in agreement with each other. For example, as participants described during interviews, all the projects implemented in the village were selected in agreement with all the community members.

However, some studies have shown that while some communities have been able to successfully and peacefully implement joint projects and benefit from them, there are also cases where joint project have created conflicts among communities, which according to Nixon (2008) demonstrates lack of ‘inter-communal’ solidarity among people.

Participants believed that the NSP is an equally distributed program. They demonstrated in their interviews that the NSP provides equal opportunities and distributes equal grants to all communities. Merchant (2010) also describes in his research that in the Takhar province a Facilitating Partner (FP) observed that social cohesion is strengthened by the NSP more than any NGO project because the NSP targets the entire community while an NGO will have a specific part of the community’s population as their target beneficiaries. He further argues that covering the entire community permits all community members to collectively decide for themselves (Merchant, 2010). The CARE International representative also demonstrated during interviews that the NSP aims to cover the whole population in the country and not a specific group. Community members also illustrated that the significance of the National Solidarity Program lies

in its design that promotes participation of all groups in a community. Merchant (2010) concludes in his research that the NSP program can be successful in building social cohesion in a community by allowing communities to participate in their community's development. He further adds that according to his research findings, 83% of facilitating partners believed that the NSP has been successful in building social cohesion and solidarity among communities. Similarly, in this study, participants also believed that the NSP has been able to unite people. The NSP has been successful in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion in small communities.

According to Ghani (1978 as cited in Kakar, 2005), Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, like the National Solidarity Program, utilized tribal and religious powers to establish the first in its kind, stable Afghan state. Similarly, the National Solidarity Program seeks to re-align local institutions for forming stable, legitimate, sustainable, and effective governance in Afghanistan.

This study highlighted cases where community members have come together to help fellow members in case of need. For example, there was a case demonstrated in the study where heavy rain destroyed a house in the village. CDC members requested community members to help the family in reconstructing the house voluntarily. Subsequently, community members not only helped in reconstructing the house but also provided a place for female members of the family to stay during the reconstruction period.

According to Maynard (2007), "Afghan culture has consultative nature" (p. 25) and this consultative nature made the NSP a preferred program among the local people. The findings in chapter four also showed that the NSP is designed in accordance to Islamic values and Afghan cultural norms, which supports consultation, unity, and equality. International Rescue Committee (IRC), one of the FPs of the NSP, merged different CDCs from different districts and provinces

to help each other and guide inexperienced CDCs (Maynard, 2007). Participants of this study also mentioned the concept of merging CDCs from different districts and provinces. They frequently mentioned, allowing different CDCs to come together can strengthen solidarity and social cohesion at a larger level in the country. Maynard (2007) also stated in his study that the initiative of linking CDCs to support and help each other promoted the notions of ‘national’ and ‘solidarity’ of the program.

Finally, this research found that there are some problems in delivering the message by the NSP to the communities. Most of the communities have stopped their activities after only one project. They are not stepping forward for future projects that can be assumed as the lack of capacity at the village level among CDCs. The NSP has not been able to build the capacities in the communities that can assist them for the future development of their communities. Participants showed interest to support their CDC after the end of the NSP; however, they are not able to implement projects without external support. There was interest in joint projects with other villages and communities but no step has been taken for such initiatives due to the lack of capacity of CDCs.

The NSP is a good source of building solidarity and social cohesion among people in the Khost province of Afghanistan. It has been able to strengthen unity and togetherness among people in rural areas of Afghanistan. The continuation of the NSP as a national program has the potential to bring positive changes in peoples’ behaviour, and will likely not only help in relationship building among people but will likely also ease the development process.

To conclude, this chapter explored the findings of 10 semi- structured email and telephone interviews conducted with participants. The results revealed that participants believed

that participation and continuous interaction between people, facilitated by NSP through CDCs, can strengthen solidarity and social cohesion among people in Afghanistan. They also believed that a catalyst is needed to facilitate the process, and in the NSP program CDCs are playing the role of facilitators of the process.

This chapter also answered the research questions by examining participants' responses and the literature reviewed. The participants' responses were discussed in light of development communication theory, participatory communication, and solidarity and social cohesion's measuring features, described in chapter two.

Next, the concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, recommendations, future research areas, and limitation in the study.

### **Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter presents a summary of the entire research. It includes the concluding remarks on research findings, recommendations, areas for future studies, and limitations.

In this study, the researcher examined the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion by studying the case of the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan. Using a qualitative research approach the study employed interview methods to collect data.

The literature review showed that throughout its history, in Afghanistan, people's participation in development process was very weak. Lack of people's participation increased the gap between people and the government. Periods of war also increased conflicts and divisions between people in the country. With the fall of the Taliban and establishment of a new government, Afghanistan once again attracted the world's attention. Major donor countries focused on the development process in Afghanistan. Tremendous aid flow in to the country

helped in starting emergency programs and designing long-term development programs. The Afghan government designed some national priority programs. The National Solidarity Program (NSP) is one of the national priority programs in the country.

The establishment of the NSP in 2003 was an initiative to develop the rural side of the country, where the majority of the population resides, and provide an opportunity for people to work together for their own development. Through the NSP, the rural population is able to decide and design their own development projects according to their needs and priorities by working together. The NSP is one of the most successful programs in Afghanistan that is functioning all over the country. The main objective of the NSP is to lay a foundation of sub-national governance in the country and allow the rural population to decide their development projects according to their needs and implement them collectively.

Afghanistan is culturally a very rich country. Working together, consulting with each other, and helping each other are very much valued in Afghan culture. The institution of Jirga in the country has played an important role in resolving conflicts among people in a consulting format. The institution of Jirga functions as a traditional judiciary but does not include any development component. The NSP is designed on the basis of 'Jirga' (conflict resolution in a collective manner) and 'Ashar' (volunteer work for development of community). One of the reasons behind the success of the NSP is its design. People have accepted it because the notion of working voluntarily as 'Ashar' and consulting each other as 'Jirga' is present in their culture.

The NSP is a Community Driven Development (CDD) program that allows development in a bottom-up approach. CDD programs encourage active involvement of all the stakeholders at all levels of development. The NSP has been able to communicate its message of strengthening solidarity and social cohesion through its participatory communication approach.

For Afghanistan, the reconstruction of social damages of war and conflict is as important as rebuilding physical infrastructure. Social cohesion and development have strong ties. Development brings people together and motivates them to achieve a mutual goal. Working together for a common goal is an indicator of strong bond among people. In the meanwhile, meaningful development requires people's participation at every step, involvement of all groups, and providing opportunity to voiceless groups. People should be the agents of change in their communities and societies. People's engagement and interaction with each other is crucial for reducing tensions, building trust, developing social cohesion, and establishing social relationships.

The literature review and findings of the study indicate that participation is not possible without communication. Development requires participation and participation needs communication. This approach of development, participation, and communication seem to allow people in specific provinces in Afghanistan to come together, forget their conflicts, and focus on the development of their communities. The process of participation through the NSP encourages people to work together in a collaborative manner for a common benefit. Through the participatory approach of development people are prone to communicate and interact with each other on issues related to their development. The interaction process between people can help in reducing the tensions and increasing a sense of acceptance. The NSP seems to create a space for community members to come together, share problems and ideas for community development, and solutions for their problems through their Community Development Councils (CDC).

CDC is an elected institution at grassroots level to plan, design, implement, and monitor development projects in a community with collective agreement and active participation of community members. In terms of participation, both, community and CDC members believe that all the community members should participate in development activities of their community.

Community members and CDC members appear to understand that supporting each other and working together benefit them all and they cannot reach their goals if they are divided.

Development process needs to be owned and directed by people themselves. The NSP is found to give the rural people of Afghanistan ownership of their own development. The marginalized population of the country has been given the opportunity to voice their needs by the NSP. The NSP can increase their confidence and ownership of the projects by allowing rural people to decide their development. This way, the people are likely to feel more responsible towards maintaining, protecting, and sustaining their development projects. The interview data revealed that the process of participation and collective decision-making seems to develop a sense of belonging and community among people. People are likely to feel connected and a part of the community, which is likely to motivate them to work together and cooperate for common good.

CDCs performances appear to have an effect on people's participation. Satisfactory results of projects implemented by CDCs in communities motivate active participation of community members in development projects. Truthful and transparent information sharing by CDC members seem to develop trust between people and CDC members. Trust is an important element of solidarity and social cohesion. When people have clear information about how decisions and financial allocations are made in a project, they are more likely to develop their trust and willingness to contribute in community development. Presence of trust between people increases their collaboration with each other and tightens the bonds they share.

The findings of the study showed that CDCs have been able to gain community members' trust. Yet, Khost province CDCs have not been able to design and implement larger projects with other communities, districts, or provinces. The study also found that due to the lack of capacity among CDC members in terms of project planning and networking, the linkages

between neighbouring CDCs are weak. CDCs also seemed to be weak in networking and building relations with different ministries.

The most important part of the NSP program is women's participation. The study found that the NSP requires women's participation in all phases of the program, but due to the poor security condition in the Khost province women are not able to participate in community meetings or be CDC members. However, the study found that although women do not participate in community meetings for project selection. Although, male community members and CDC members, while selecting projects in the community, take women's needs and priorities into consideration, in order to make the NSP a fully participatory program women's active presence in all steps of the program is essential. In the meanwhile, women's participation is meaningful only if their decisions and contributions in the program is valued and considered.

In summary, reconstruction and development through participation by the NSP appear to be a promoter of solidarity and social cohesion among people in the Khost province of Afghanistan. In general, the process of participatory communication seems to reinforce the consciousness and willingness of communities regarding cooperation and contribution to reconstruction and development. Further, interactions between community members in regular meetings held by CDCs appear to increase communication between community members. These meetings encourage community members to be part of the decision-making and problem solving processes in their community. The process of participation and communication can help to reduce conflicts and promote cooperation among people. Participatory communication, through the NSP, seems to promote inter-community cooperation among people in the villages. This participatory process of the NSP is a key to empowerment of rural population. Participatory communication through the NSP has the potential to reduce conflicts and increase solidarity and social cohesion among people in Afghanistan. CDCs play an important role in encouraging

people to participate in community development and work in collaboration for their community development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

The current communication process between CDCs and community members should continue and improve upon on as needed basis. Conducting regular meetings with neighbouring CDC members is suggested. These meetings can help CDC members from different districts to coordinate needs and priorities, plan for larger joint projects, and build solidarity and social cohesion among all citizens in the Khost province.

CDCs' capacity building is also an important issue that has to be taken into consideration. There are trainings and workshops to help elected CDC members to develop skills in planning, implementing, and monitoring the projects; CDCs also need to adopt networking skills to establish linkages with other CDCs and different governmental institutions such as ministries and provincial departments. The study recommends capacity building of CDCs for networking and establishing relationships with relevant parties and institutions such as donor agencies and private sector. This way, CDCs can be sustainable and can continue to use existing sources in the country for development.

The study also recommends a larger gathering of CDC members from all over the country every year. Such an event was once held in 2005 in Kabul, which resulted in bringing together different ethnic groups from all over the country. Continuing this process can help in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion at a national level and among different ethnic

groups. During this event CDCs throughout the country can come together, share experiences for cross learning purposes as well as for planning and developing future development projects.

During the study, participants showed concern about the sustainability of the NSP program. The researcher recommends that the NSP should concentrate more on making CDCs self-sufficient by providing them with capacity development training on resource mobilization so that CDCs are able to raise funds for community projects from alternative sources in case of funding deficiency by the government and international community.

In order to increase women's participation in the community development process, the study's recommendation to donors and the government of Afghanistan is that they consider reducing the amount of Block Grants of those communities that prevent women's participation in the program and rewarding those communities that have encouraged women's participation.

### **Limitations**

The study faced several challenges and limitations. Given that the study used computer-mediated-communication tools such as email, for data collection purpose, the researcher had to establish rapport with participants, which was a challenge with e-mail interviews (Ketyon, 2006). Additionally, the text format of e-mail interviews lack nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, postures, and tone of voice (Curasi, 2001, as cited in Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Data collection through e-mail interview took longer because some participants were not able to reply promptly due to their busy schedules, and sometimes Internet service would create communication problem (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). In contrast, telephone interviews were fairly simple and quick. The researcher did not face many problems contacting participants via phone.

Like any research method, a case study also has its limitations. According to Neale et al. (2006), case studies provide comprehensive and detailed information that make them lengthy and may not hold readers. The second limitation, described by Neale et al. (2006), is generalization of findings. There are also concerns about the rigidity in case studies. To avoid such limitations this study considered a systematic data collection by not allowing biasness and focused to ensure the validity and reliability of the study (Neale et al., 2006). Like any other methods qualitative research also has limitations such as it is more time consuming (Keyton, 2006) but presents a detailed and comprehensive study. This study was not able to interview the number of participants that was proposed initially in the thesis proposal stage. 10 participants were interviewed. Due to the busy schedules of the World Bank NSP team and the NSP, they could not participate in the interview. More community members and CDC members in the Khost Province than it initially proposed were interviewed. Since there were no women CDC members in the Khost province, the study was not able to obtain women's perspective on the topic.

### **Future Research Areas**

This research examined the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion by studying the case of the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan. This study focused on solidarity and social cohesion in a small and homogenous community. Future studies can focus on role of participatory communication in strengthening inter-communal solidarity and social cohesion at a larger level between two or more provinces, large districts, or in heterogeneous communities. In addition, future studies can also concentrate on identification of challenges in establishing linkages between CDCs in different provinces.

Future research is required to investigate the barriers against women's participation in the program. Given the fact that security is often presented as one of the most important factors in

preventing women's participation, future research should investigate whether it is a contributing factor or just another excuse by male members in the community to prevent women's involvement. Future research should also focus if cultural constraints, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence among women, prevent women from actively participating in community development initiatives.

Finally, one of the main objectives of the National Solidarity Program is to establish sub-national governance at that grassroots level and to integrate rural population in the state rehabilitation process. In order to assess whether the program has been able to achieve this objective, a national level study needs to be conducted

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

Despite having limitations, this study has contributed to the discourse of communication and development. The study offers insights of those at grassroots levels who are affected by development projects designed on the basis of participatory communication. The study also opens a window for the NSP to further focus on women's inclusion in the program and develop strategies to strengthen women's participation in the Program.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Solicitation Letter**

Hello,

You are invited to participate in research conducted by Hosai Qasmi, M.A. student at communication department of University of Ottawa, under the supervision of Professor Rukhsana Ahmed, Ph.D. at the University of Ottawa.

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of participatory communication in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion among rural population of Afghanistan. Interactions of people in rural communities will be examined to understand if and how participatory communication by the National Solidarity Program (NSP) has been able to strengthen solidarity and social cohesion among people in Afghanistan.

Participants will be asked to reply to a set of questions send to them through email or asked them in telephone. The data that you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the information you provided.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you initially wish to participate but change your mind, later, you will be able to withdraw from the study.

Your participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of role of participatory communication in building solidarity and social cohesion. Your participation will also help the study to understand has the NSP's participatory communication approach strengthened social cohesion and solidarity among people.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Hosai Qasmi

## Appendix B

### Consent Form

Building Solidarity and social cohesion through the participatory communication in Afghanistan:  
A Case of The National Solidarity Program

**Researcher:** Hosai Qasmi Department of Communication Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies University of Ottawa

**Supervisor:** Prof. Rukhsana Ahmed, Ph.D. Department of Communication Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies University of Ottawa.

**Invitation to Participate:** I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Hosai Qasmi and Prof. Rukhsana Ahmed, Ph.D.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study is to explore the role of participatory communication in building solidarity and social cohesion in Afghanistan. The study will examine the NSP's participatory approach in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion among people in Afghanistan.

**Participation:** My participation will consist of an interview session conducted through email or telephone. If conducted through telephone the session will be for approximately 30-45 minutes. In this interview I will be asked questions by the researcher about the NSP project in my district and community members.

**Risks:** I understand that there is no risk involved in participating in this study, beyond those risks experienced in everyday life.

**Benefits:** My participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of the NSP participatory approach for strengthening solidarity in rural areas in Afghanistan. My participation will also help in understanding how participatory communication can help community members to be united and support social cohesion.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:** I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be

used only for the creation of a Master's thesis and that my confidentiality will be protected by the fact that only the researchers will have access to the data. Anonymity will be protected by the removal of any identifying characteristics from the data during the analysis and reporting stages.

**Conservation of Data:** The data collected, including tape recordings of interviews, electronic and print versions of transcripts, and electronic and print notes will be kept by the researcher in a secure manner. The electronic data will be stored on a USB drive and both the drive as well as the printed materials will be kept in the supervisor's office. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data and it will be conserved for 5 years. After the conservation period has expired, all the electronic records will be securely deleted. Paper documents will be completely shredded.

**Voluntary Participation:** I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be deleted and/or destroyed.

**Acceptance:** I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Hosai Qasmi M.A. student of the Department of Communication, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, University of Ottawa which is under the supervision of Prof. Rukhsana Ahmed, Ph.D.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Questions for Community Development Council (CDC) members:**

1. Can you please share your experience working with the National Solidarity Program?
2. How important do you think the National Solidarity Program is for Afghanistan and why?
3. How do you feel about people's cooperation with Community Development Councils in community projects?
4. What challenges do you face while conducting meetings with community members?
5. How do people react on joint projects with other communities?
6. How do you think about participatory approach of the NSP?
7. What impact do you see on Afghan people's life after the establishment of the National Solidarity Program?
8. What benefits and challenges do joint projects have?
9. Can you give an example of a collective action by people through the NSP for community development or helping neighbour villages or districts?
10. How do you see the cooperation between Community Development Councils and community members?
11. Can you please shed light on the solidarity part of the program? Has the National Solidarity Program been able to strengthen solidarity and social cohesion among community members, if so, how? If no, why?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share?

#### **Questions for community members:**

1. What do you think about Community Development Councils and the National Solidarity Program in your community?
2. In your opinion, how important is the National Solidarity Program for Afghanistan and why?
3. What do you think about joint projects through the NSP with neighbour districts or villages?
4. How do you see cooperation of people with CDCs?

5. Can you please tell me if you ever participated in community development projects decided by Community Development Councils? If yes, can you please give an example, and if no, please explain why?
6. How do you see people's volunteer work after the establishment of the National Solidarity Program?
7. Do you support joint projects? If yes, why? If no, why?
8. What do you think about the NSP design and its benefits that allow people's participation?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share?

**Questions for Facilitating Partners:**

1. Can you please share your experience working as a facilitating partner with the National Solidarity Program?
2. How do you feel about people's cooperation with Community Development Councils in community projects?
3. Can you please explain how you measure the National Solidarity Program success?
4. How do you see people's participation in the program?
5. Can you please describe the challenges you face while mobilizing people and convincing them to participate in programs?
6. Can you please describe the challenges you face while implementing projects in the community?
7. How do you feel about the National Solidarity Program in terms of solidarity building?
8. Can you please tell me how you measure solidarity among community members?
9. The National Solidarity Program has a participatory approach; how do you feel about the participatory approach of the National Solidarity Program and its effect on solidarity building?
10. Do you think Community Development Councils and the National Solidarity Program have been able to strengthen solidarity among people? If yes, can you please elaborate on it, and if not what do you think the reasons are?
11. In your opinion, what do people think about joint projects and how is their cooperation in those projects?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share?

## Appendix D

**Table 3**  
**Coding Process**

| Relevant text                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Codes                                                 | Themes                | Subtheme                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| When I was selected as CDC member I felt responsible towards my peoples' vote. They trusted me and selected me to represent them. It is a very big and noble responsibility                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Responsibility/ trust                                 | Trust                 |                                                               |
| People feel that they are owners and have equal authority in deciding for their benefit.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Equality/ ownership                                   | Ownership             |                                                               |
| People worked very hard and willingly for the project of clean water in our community. They know that this project will have direct effect on their lives. They have decided for it and they feel responsible for it.                                                                                                                                                                                       | Working together/ responsibility/ collective benefit. | Participatory society | Cooperative action for collective good                        |
| Having such councils is very good for the community. This council brings people together and then they decide together, if there was no such council everyone would do what he wants but this council unite people and bring them together                                                                                                                                                                  | Collectiveness                                        |                       | Cooperative action for collective good                        |
| We estimated the cost for the project but the project started after two years till then the price of cement in market was increased. While we were implementing the project we saw the shortage in money. We did approach some organizations but we could not complete the money we needed. Then we asked the people in community and they came together collected money and we could continue the project. | Contribution/ collectiveness                          | Participatory society | Sense of contribution/ Cooperative action for collective good |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                        |                                     |                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| They have helped a lot during implementation of this project.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                        |                                     |                                                                 |
| The speciality and exclusiveness of this program was in its nature of implementation where communities were given the right to identify few basic projects that really respond to their most crucial necessities and which would be the most important for them.                                 | Right and opportunity to decide                                                        | Opportunity to voiceless population |                                                                 |
| The opportunity to identify basic needs of your community and have the liberty to be involved in the implementation process, itself gave the mentality to the community members to extend their utmost contribution. Strong desire was shown by our community members to work voluntarily        | Opportunity to decide/ involvement/ desire to contribute/ working together voluntarily | Participatory society/ ownership.   | Sense of contribution<br>Active participation for a common good |
| It is a very good and important program for Afghanistan because it is able to reach the rural and poor people who were not heard in any time by any government.<br>Now through the NSP we, the rural and poor people, are able to raise our voice talk about our needs and decide for our selves | Opportunity to decide/ being heard                                                     | Opportunity to voiceless population |                                                                 |
| I support the joint projects because it will implement bigger projects. The projects that will not benefit a small community but a bigger community and even a province. Through joint projects                                                                                                  |                                                                                        |                                     |                                                                 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                               |                                           |                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| at first a province will be benefited then the country. People will think and work for each other and betterment of the country.                                                                                                                      |                                                               |                                           |                                                |
| There are cultural, social and some other differences among local in different communities which in some cases those mostly indicates the financial interest of families in certain communities as well                                               | Differences among communities                                 | Community structure                       |                                                |
| The water project was selected by us all together, therefore, now the families in our village pay for the daily expenditure such as fuel, maintenance and salary of the person responsible for running and maintaining the generator.                 | Maintenance/ protection                                       | Ownership                                 | Sense of responsibility/ sense of contribution |
| Well I think if we work we do mistakes. No one is free from flaws but the important point is to correct the mistake on time.                                                                                                                          | Less critical                                                 | Participatory society                     | Sense of acceptance                            |
| The good point about our CDC is that they do not let conflicts or problems to grow. They bring the issue immediately in the meetings held in the community. And, every problem has a solution if it is discussed                                      | Conflict resolution                                           | Conflict resolution through communication |                                                |
| In one of our target districts a deep well project was identified as a need by the residents. This district consisted of two main villages. While implementing this project it was extremely difficult to identify an appropriate place for the well, | Communication among people/ consent building/ problem solving | Conflict resolution through communication | Dialogue at community level                    |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| where residents of both villages could have easy access, and could use the well jointly. With the establishment of CDC through the NSP, both villages were given the opportunity to deliberate on the issue and identify an appropriate place for the construction of the well where both villages could have easy access |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|

**Notes:**

**Relavant text:** Text from the interview data related to the topic of the research

**Code:** Saldaña (2013) states, “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3).

**Theme:** Saldaña (2013) states “a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (p. 13).

**Sub-theme:** is a sub category of a main theme that describes a related topic of the main theme.

## Appendix E

File Number: 02-13-10

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 03/22/2013



**Université d'Ottawa** **University of Ottawa**  
 Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

### Ethics Approval Notice Social Science and Humanities REB

#### Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

| <u>First Name</u> | <u>Last Name</u> | <u>Affiliation</u>   | <u>Role</u>        |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Rukhsana          | Ahmed            | Arts / Communication | Supervisor         |
| Hosai             | Qasmi            | Arts / Communication | Student Researcher |

File Number: 02-13-10

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

**Title:** Building solidarity and social cohesion through participatory communication in Afghanistan: A case of National Solidarity Program

| <b>Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b> | <b>Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b> | <b>Approval Type</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 03/22/2013                        | 03/21/2014                      | Ia                   |

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

#### Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A